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Glaucous Gull, Troon, Ayrshire, February 2018. © *Iain Leach*

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Scottish Birds is the quarterly journal for SOC members, and is published in March, June, September and December annually.

Containing original papers relating to ornithology in Scotland, topical articles, bird observations, reports of rare and scarce bird sightings, alongside branch and Club-related news, our members tell us that *Scottish Birds* is one of the key benefits of belonging to the SOC. Its different sections have been developed to meet the wide needs of the birdwatching community, and the publication is renowned for its first-class photography.

An archive of the journal is available on the SOC website, where links can be found to other Club publications including the *Scottish Bird Report* online.

More about the SOC...

On the one hand, a birdwatching club. Established in 1936, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) is Scotland's bird club with 15 branches around the country and a growing membership of over 3,000. Through a programme of talks, outings, conferences and other events, it brings together like-minded individuals with a passion for birds, nature and conservation.

On the other, a network of volunteers across Scotland, gathering vital, impartial information about our wild birds. The data we collect is made available to conservationists, planners and developers, and is used by organisations such as the RSPB, as one of the first points of reference in informed conservation planning.

Club Headquarters can be found at Waterston House, Aberlady, overlooking the scenic local nature reserve. Housed within, is the George Waterston Library, the largest ornithological library in Scotland, and the Donald Watson Gallery – one of the jewels in the Waterston House crown, exhibiting wildlife art all year-round.

Join us...

As well as receiving *Scottish Birds* every quarter, SOC members have access to a programme of talks and outings across Scotland and affiliation to a local branch of the Club. New members will receive a welcome pack on joining, plus a thank you gift if paying their subscription by direct debit.

Annual membership rates*

Adult (aged 18 and over)	£	36.00
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Rates valid until end of August 2019 (†31 December 2019), subject to change thereafter.

For more information about the Club and its activities, including details of how to join, please visit www.the-soc.org.uk or contact Waterston House on 01875 871 330, or email membership@the-soc.org.uk

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President's Foreword

Plate 91. James Main, May 2018. © *Doreen Main*

The Annual Birdwatchers' Spring Conference in Dumfries at the Barony Centre was a great success. The Conference theme was on the birds of Dumfries and Galloway and coincided with the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Donald Watson, a prominent bird artist and former President of the SOC. There was a full house to hear a series of excellent presentations on many topics relating to the birds of the area as well as an excellent presentation by John Threlfall on the work of Donald Watson from an artist's perspective. These conferences are held jointly with the BTO, with each of us leading the organisation of the conference in alternate years. Many thanks to Dumfries and Stewartry Branches and the BTO for organising this great event. Next year's spring conference will be held in Oban on March organised jointly between the Argyll Bird Club, BTO and SOC.

Preparations are well under way for this autumn's SOC Annual Conference which will, this year, be at the Macdonald Aviemore Highland Resort from 26th–28th October (see booking information enclosed). Aviemore is a really good location for our conference and we are pleased to be returning there after a gap of some five years. The programme's theme is Birds in a Human Landscape. We are fortunate to have a number of excellent speakers on topics including sites such as forest, oil platforms and even sewage farms. I am sure that the talks will be very topical and thought provoking.

As ever there has been a series of art exhibitions at Waterston House over the past few months and these have been very successful. There was a first for the Club when the Society of Wildlife Artists mounted an exhibition by over 20 different artists. Normally the SWLA exhibit in London but they chose Aberlady for a Scottish exhibition. We said goodbye to Dave Allan, on his retirement at the end of March, and welcomed Laura Gressani as our new Art Exhibitions Co-ordinator. We also welcome Stuart Rivers, who is well known to many of us, as HQ's Birding Officer and Scott Paterson as our Guided Walks Organiser.

The club has had a really good response to the appeal to members to provide their consent to receive club email communications in line with the new data protection regulations. Thank you to all of you who have responded. For anyone who has not signed up and wishes to do so the consent form is still available on the SOC website: www.the-soc.org.uk/members-area

Best wishes to all and a good summer's birding!

James Main, SOC President.

Plate 92. Olive-backed Pipit, Seacliff, Lothian, 24 April 2016. © *Ian Andrews*

Scottish Birds Records Committee report on rare birds in Scotland, 2016

R.Y. MCGOWAN & C.J. MCINERNY
on behalf of the Scottish Birds Records Committee

This is the ninth annual report of the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC), covering 2016. Previous reports have covered the periods 2005–08, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, McGowan *et al.* 2013, 2014, McGowan & McInerny 2015, 2016, 2017).

The report's species and subspecies remain the same as 2015. White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* is assessed locally in Shetland and the Outer Hebrides; and Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* is assessed locally in Shetland, Fair Isle and Orkney.

However, from 1 January 2017, Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca,* Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* and Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* are removed from the SBRC list. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* remains on the SBRC list, but with local assessment in Shetland and Fair Isle; and Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* are added to the SBRC List. A summary of these changes is given in Appendix 2 and shown at www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-list-past-lists

In 2016, the most striking feature was the exceptional influx of Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* with a record total of 106 birds observed between 8 September and 22 November, with 70 of these on Shetland alone. The previous highest Scottish annual total was 66 in 2014, with 44 on Shetland, though six were recorded in spring that year (McGowan & McInerny 2015).

Format of the report

The species accounts in the report follow a standard format, which is modelled on the annual BBRC reports published in *British Birds*. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow the *Scottish List* (Forrester 2017).

On the header line, after the species or subspecies name, are three numbers:

- Total number of birds in Scotland to the end of 2004, based on Forrester *et al.* (2007), with adjustments in some cases, and also including records added in this report. In some cases, older records, 'At sea' records, or records pertaining to the breeding population are explicitly excluded from the totals, following the example of Forrester *et al.* (2007). In the case of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, numbers seen in the past were so great that totals have not been estimated.
- Total number of birds in Scotland during the period since 2004, but excluding the current year.
- Where appropriate, acceptances by BBRC and by local committees are included. Returning birds or repeat sightings of the same individual, insofar as these can be judged, are not counted.
- Total number in the current year (2016).

Immediately below the header line is a table of accepted Scottish records for 2016, with details. For those species assessed locally in the Northern Isles, full details of accepted Northern Isles records are not given. Instead, they are summarised as a separate table or in the text.

For all taxa, information is also provided about pre-2016 records that were not included in previous reports. These are presented in reverse chronological order. Records assessed by SBRC are listed in full, otherwise only summary information is provided.

It should be noted that records of individual birds reappearing at the same location in subsequent years can be accepted by local recorders without formal submission to SBRC; full details of these returning birds are nonetheless provided. Revised details are also provided for some pre-2016 records published previously.

For each record listed in full, the following information is provided. For additional details, see ap Rheinallt *et al.* (2010a).

- Year
- Recording area www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/local-recorders-network
- Location(s). In the case of some recording areas, individual islands or component administrative areas are also named.
- Number of birds if more than one, with age and/or sex if known.
- 'Returning' if applicable.
- Date(s). Note that the use of a date range does not necessarily imply that a bird was confirmed to be present throughout; in some cases, it may have been observed only on the first and last dates given.
- 'Found dead' or 'died' if applicable.
- 'Trapped' if applicable.
- Existence of a photograph, video or sound recording, if this formed part of the assessment process.
- Names of observers, in alphabetical order. Every effort has been made to name only those people who played a part in finding and/or identifying the bird. However, if no submission was made by these observers, the submitter of the record is also credited: if the submitter was the local recorder this is shown as '*per* Local Recorder'. All other observers are covered by the use of '*et al.*'.
- Details and location of specimen if preserved in a museum, with specimen accession number if available.

- Additional sightings of the same bird at a different location, or a cross-reference to additional sightings in a different recording area or year. Where a bird is said to be the same, this is usually a presumption based on the judgment of the observer, local recorder and/or others.

The table of records is followed by the main text of the species account. At the end of each account, a brief summary of global breeding and wintering distribution, with mention of relevant subspecies, is given in parentheses.

Species coverage

Species coverage is unchanged from the last report. Rare subspecies of several species on the SBRC list are still assessed by BBRC, the most important being Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* and Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*. For these, the accounts in the SBRC report summarise accepted BBRC records in order to give as complete a picture as possible of the species' occurrence in Scotland.

A list of records assessed by SBRC and considered to be 'not proven' can be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 summarises the involvement of different committees in the assessment of the taxa on the SBRC list. Appendix 3 lists minor corrections to previous SBRC reports.

SBRC

SBRC was set up in 1984 as a subcommittee of the SOC Council. Its role is to assess records of species that are rare in Scotland but not rare enough in Britain to be assessed by BBRC. Current members are Mark Wilkinson (Chairman), Jim Dickson (replacing John Bowler in 2017), John Nadin, David Parnaby, Dave Pullan, Martin Scott and Mark Warren; Chris McInerny is non-voting Secretary and Bob McGowan is non-voting Museum Consultant. For more information about SBRC, see ap Rheinallt *et al.* (2010a) and www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/about-sbrc

Records accepted by SBRC are published on the SOC website at www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/recent-decisions as soon as they are processed, and thereafter in annual reports, such as this, published in *Scottish Birds*. The accepted record details are also added to Excel files which list records for SBRC species, and display the data chronologically, by recording area and graphically. Examples of the graphs have been used in SBRC annual reports published in *Scottish Birds*, such as those showing Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* records both by year and month in this report. The Excel files are archived at the Waterston Library, SOC Headquarters, Aberlady www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/library. They may be consulted on request, and we encourage interested parties to use this resource.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we are grateful to all observers who submitted records of Scottish rarities during the period. Without their efforts, this report could not exist. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to those who gave permission for their excellent photographs to be reproduced here.

Next, we thank the following current and former recorders and report compilers for their assistance in compiling, checking and correcting records for this report: Yvonne Benting, Paul Collin, Jon Cook, Martin Cook, Jim Dickson, Iain English, Rob Fray, Nick Littlewoood, Martin Moncrieff, David Parkinson, David Parnaby, Scott Petterson, Ian Ricketts, Fraser Simpson, Graham Sparshott, Peter Stronach, Malcolm Ware, Stephen Welch, Jim Williams, and Val Wilson. We are particularly grateful for the co-operation of the Northern Isles recorders in helping to compile summaries for species assessed locally within their areas.

We thank Ian Andrews for making available the database of records of scarce and rare species used during the preparation of Forrester *et al.* (2007).

Systematic list of accepted records

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*
0: 13: 4

Table 1. Accepted records of Egyptian Goose in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Fife** The Wilderness, Ladybank, adult, 24 July, photo (K. Blasco).
Lothian River Esk, Musselburgh, adult, 5 August, photo (L.M. Pulawski).
Orkney North End, Sanday, adult, two, 1 February until 11 March, one to 16 March, photo (R. Neave, E. Peace *et al.*).

Egyptian Goose was added to Category C of the *Scottish List* in 2010 (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2012). The species is a very rare, but annual visitor, with observations throughout the country.

The Fife record was the first for the recording area.

Records of the species since 1 January 2017 are not considered by SBRC (Appendix 2).

(Breeds throughout Africa south of 20°N latitude, extending farther north into southern Egypt, the only part of its natural range to fall within the Western Palearctic. Substantial naturalised populations are present in England, the Netherlands and Denmark, with smaller numbers breeding in Belgium, France and Germany.)

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*
19 (of 23 birds): 45: 3

Table 2. Accepted records of Lesser Scaup in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Clyde** Barr Loch, Lochwinnoch, adult, male, 30 April to 1 May, photo, nasal saddle tag 'VH' (J.J. Sweeney *et al.*).
Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, adult, male, 12–30 December, photo (G. & A. Chambers, B.D. Henderson).
Orkney Loch of Boardhouse, Birsay, adult, male, 26 November **to 2017,** photo (A. Forsyth *et al.*).
Shetland Lochs of Houlland and Benston, Mainland, second-calendar-year, male, 1–16 January, photo, same as **2015** (McGowan & McInerny 2017).

Lesser Scaup is a rare though increasing visitor to Scotland, with observations throughout the country. Most records have been of singles, although multiples, including a group of three, have been observed. A number of individuals have remained for extended periods, sometimes moving between sites, and have returned in following years.

The Dumfries & Galloway record was unusual in that the bird was found on salt water at Loch Ryan in a flock of Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*, which winter in large numbers at the site. Lesser Scaup is typically found on fresh water.

The Clyde bird had a nasal saddle tag with the annotation 'VH', fitted in Portugal at São Jacinto Dunes Nature Reserve, near Aveiro on 20 December 2013, when it was aged as a first-calendar-year, and where it remained until 3 February 2014 http://btoringing.blogspot.co.uk/2014/11/portuguese-ringed-lesser-scaup-in-wales.html. This bird was also recognised at Llyn Syfaddan (Llangorse Lake) in Powys, Wales on 17 October 2014, and at Vane Farm, Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross), although the latter observation has not been submitted to SBRC. This is apparently the first European recovery of a marked bird for the species. The bird was later shot in Northern Ireland - see 'Report on Scarce Birds' in *British Birds*.

Lesser Scaup was previously assessed by BBRC, and only judged by SBRC since 1 January 2015 (Appendix 2).

(Breeds in North America from Alaska to Ontario and south to California, Colorado and Minnesota. Most migrate to winter from USA south to Central America, the Caribbean and Hawaiian Islands, but smaller numbers regularly move eastwards to winter in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.)

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*
197: 258: 24

Table 3. Accepted records of White-billed Diver in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Argyll** North coast of Mull, opposite Ardnamurchan, adult, 5 March, photo (E. & J. Miles).
Dumfries & Galloway Dunskirloch, Corsewall Point, 28–30 April, photo (B.D Henderson).
Highland Uig Bay, Skye, Skye & Lochalsh, adult, 28 February to 15 March, photo (M. Lumb).

Highland Loch Broom, Ullapool, Ross & Cromarty, second-calendar-year, 11 April (P. Howard).
Moray & Nairn Burghead, adult, 18 March to 12 May (R. Proctor); same Lossiemouth, 7 April (R. Proctor); same Lossiemouth, 1–6 May, photo (R. Proctor, M. Warren).
Moray & Nairn Burghead Bay, 10–16 July, photo (R.S. Cocks *et al. per* Local Recorder).
North-east Scotland Findlater Castle, Sandend, two, 16 March, photo (P. Stronach *et al.*).
North-east Scotland Blackdog, third-calendar-year, 14 August, photo (N. Littlewood *et al.*).
North-east Scotland Peterhead, adult, 13 September (M. Innes).
Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, adult, 28 May (G. Woodbridge).
Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, adult, 6 November (G. Prescott, S. Perfect).
Outer Hebrides Sgiogarstaigh (Skigersta), Lewis, 14–24 March (B.A.E. Marr).
Outer Hebrides Port Nis (Port of Ness), Lewis, two, 15 March (B.A.E. Marr).
Outer Hebrides Eòlaigearraidh (Eoligarry), Barra, 29 March to 1 May, photo (I. Ricketts, B. Taylor).
Outer Hebrides Sgiogarstaigh (Skigersta), Lewis, two, 2–4 April (B.A.E. Marr).
Outer Hebrides Sgiogarstaigh (Skigersta), Lewis, two, 19–29 April (B.A.E. Marr).
Outer Hebrides Eòlaigearraidh (Eoligarry), Barra, adult, 18 May (B. Taylor).
Outer Hebrides Brèibhig (Brevig), Barra, adult, 5 June (B. Taylor).
Shetland Bluemull Sound, two, adults, returning, 17 January, photo (P.A. Harris, M. Heubeck, B.H. Thomason); same, first adult, 21 November, photo (B.H. Thomason); same, second adult, 13 December, photo (B.H. Thomason).
Shetland Hoy Sound, Weisdale Voe, adult, 20 January (P.A. Harris, M. Heubeck).
Shetland Basta Voe, Yell, third-calendar-year, 22 April to 8 June, photo (B.H. Thomason *et al.*).

White-billed Diver is a scarce though regular visitor to Scotland, with up to 30 being reported each year. Most occur at a number of favoured localities in the Outer Hebrides, north-west Highland, Moray & Nairn and North-east Scotland used in spring as stop-over sites between wintering and summering areas. In Shetland and Orkney, a small number of wintering individuals return to the same sites in successive years, and summering birds have become almost annual. There may be some overlap among Scottish records given the species' mobility. It also seems likely that a proportion of the spring birds return to use the same stop-over sites each year. As it is impossible to distinguish these and they are registered as new birds, SBRC totals are probably inflated.

The record of a new wintering population of up to 13 White-billed Divers off Papa Westray (Orkney) in November–December 2016 published in *Scottish Birds* (McKay 2017) has yet to be accepted by SBRC (Appendix 1).

(Breeds in parts of Arctic Russia, Alaska and Arctic Canada; winters on the Pacific coasts of Russia and Canada, and along the Atlantic coast of Norway and in the North Atlantic.)

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis* c. 228: 28: 1

Table 4. Accepted record of Cory's Shearwater in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Lothian** Scoughall, 29 August (C.N. Davison).

Cory's Shearwater is a rare visitor to Scottish waters, recorded near-annually, with most seen off North Ronaldsay and the Outer Hebrides during the late summer and early autumn. A very few enter the North Sea where they are observed moving along the east coast. Although a marked increase in sightings from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s occurred (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2010a), numbers since have decreased, with about two or less seen annually, although none were observed in 2015.

(Breeds on the Azores, Canary Islands and other nearby Atlantic islands, with the closely related Scopoli's Shearwater *C. diomedea* breeding in the Mediterranean. Both species occur in North Atlantic waters in autumn and are on the British List, but most are assumed to be Cory's, with Scopoli's not yet recorded in Scottish waters.)

Continental Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* 3: 34: 0

Table 5. Accepted record of Continental Cormorant in Scotland, 1873.

1873: **Orkney** adult, male, 30 March, skin at National Museums Scotland (accession number NMS.Z 1888.84.162) (T.W. Dougall, R.Y. McGowan).

Continental Cormorant is a rare visitor to Scotland, with a pattern of most records along the east coast and Shetland in the first half of the year. There were only three accepted

Scottish records by 2007, but since then multiple sightings annually, with a high of five on Shetland.

Claims of Continental Cormorant after 1 January 2013 are not assessed by SBRC (McGowan *et al.* 2013). However, SBRC still considers records before this date. While working with the bird collection at National Museums Scotland Tom Dougall noted that a Cormorant specimen collected on Orkney from an unspecified location during the 19th Century had a gular patch angle within the range of the continental subspecies *sinensis*. Following acceptance of the identification by SBRC this made it the first Scottish, and second British, record (McGowan *et al.* 2018).

As noted, SBRC ceased assessment of this taxon from 2013 and accordingly the middle total in the header above covers the period 2005–2012 only.

(*P. c. sinensis* breeds throughout central and southern Europe and has expanded recently into parts of northern Europe; outside the breeding season it occurs both inland and on coasts through much of Europe, including England. Nominate *P. c. carbo* breeds in north-west Europe including Iceland, Norway and the British Isles.)

Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
46: 12: 2

Table 6. Accepted records of Night-heron in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Orkney** Black Loch, Cleat, Sanday, first-calendar-year, 22 November to 13 December, photo (A. Hough, S. Walker *et al.*).
Shetland Clach-na-Strom, Whiteness, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 4 December, photo (J. Davies).

Night-heron is a less-than-annual visitor to Scotland, with a spring peak in observations. There is a wide geographical spread, but most are seen in the Northern Isles and the Outer Hebrides.

Considering the rarity of Nigh-heron in Scotland (none were seen during 2015), it was possible that the two 2016 records were of the same bird, which had moved to Shetland temporarily during its three week stay on Orkney. However, photographs of the bills of the two birds established that they were different individuals.

(Holarctic with four subspecies. Nominate *nycticorax* breeding in mainland Europe and into Asia, with another subspecies in North America. Populations move south in winter.)

Plate 93. Night-heron, first-calendar-year, Black Loch, Cleat, Sanday, Orkney, 22 November to 13 December 2016. © *Adam Hough*

Plate 94. Cattle Egret, Carbans, Clyde, 24 April 2016. © *Davie Abraham*

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
3: 9: 1

Table 7. Accepted record of Cattle Egret in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Clyde** Carbans, 24 April, photo (D. Abraham, R. Smith).

Cattle Egret remains very rare in Scotland, although more are being found. This reflects the increase in numbers seen in England, where the species first bred in 2008.

The only record for 2016 was the first for the recording area. It was found and photographed by an observer working their 'local patch', but remained for just 25 minutes, and was seen by one other observer. Likely it was in fields with livestock nearby but, frustratingly, could not be refound.

(Occurs widely in sub-tropical and temperate areas throughout the world, the European population being centred on the Mediterranean, extending north to central and western France, with increasing numbers of records farther north. Generally a short-distance migrant.)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
c. 65: 50: 6

Table 8. Accepted records of Glossy Ibis in Scotland, 2016, with additional records from 2015 and 2013.

2016: **Fife** Letham Pools, 25 November, photo (W. Dickson).
Highland Kyleakin, Isle of Skye, Skye & Lochalsh, 10 January, photo (A. & E. Horner).
North-east Scotland Slains Pool & Loch of Strathbeg, two, second-calendar-year, one 16–19 May, then two together 20–26 May, photo (P.S. Crockett *et al. per* Local Recorder).
North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, 18–19 December, photo (*per* Local Recorder).
Orkney Hooking Loch, North Ronaldsay, 30 October to 15 November, photo (L. Simulik *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Caisteal Ormacleit (Ormiclate Castle), South Uist, adult, 1–2 January, photo, same as **2015** (McGowan & McInerny 2017).
Shetland Tupton, Unst, second-calendar-year, 1–2 January, photo, found dead on 2 January, same as **2015** (McGowan & McInerny 2017).
2015: **Outer Hebrides** Allathasdal (Allasdale), Barra, first-calendar-year, 30 August to 1 September, photo (B.A. Taylor *et al.*).
2013: **Dumfries & Galloway** Caerlaverock, four, first-calendar-year, 30 September to 3 October, photo, (M. Youdale *per* Local Recorder *et al.*); same Mersehead, 3 October; same Baldoon, 8–9 October.

Glossy Ibis is a rare, though increasingly frequent, visitor to Scotland. In the early 20th Century a few flocks were observed, including a group of 19–20 in Orkney in September 1907, but the species subsequently became much rarer (Forrester *et al.* 2007). In the early 21st Century larger numbers and flocks were seen again in the UK, with more being observed in Scotland, including groups in Orkney and the Outer Hebrides.

Records of the species since 1 January 2017 are not considered by SBRC (Appendix 2).

(Nominate *falcinellus* breeds from Spain and France, through the Balkans to central Asia, in sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent, south-east Asia, the east coast of the USA and the Caribbean. Most European birds migrate to Africa with others short distance migrants or resident. Another subspecies in the Far East and Australia).

Plate 95. Glossy Ibis, Letham Pools, Fife, 25 November 2016. © *William Dickson*

Plate 96. Black Kite, Flodaigh (Flodda), Benbecula, Outer Hebrides, 12 May 2016. © *Mark Mitchell*

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
19: 25: 4

Table 9. Accepted records of Black Kite in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Argyll** near Machrihanish, Kintyre, 11 May, video (A. MacCormick *per* Local Recorder).
Dumfries & Galloway Bennan, near Moniaive, 21 April (C. McKay).
Outer Hebrides Liurbost (Leurbost), Lewis, 25–27 April, photo (A. Carroll, A. McNab *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Flodaigh (Flodda), Benbecula, 12 May, photo (M. Mitchell, A. Robinson *et al.*).

Black Kite is a very rare visitor to Scotland from continental Europe. Most have been seen in spring, from April to June, with far fewer sightings in summer and autumn. There have also been instances of summering, and a single case of hybridisation with Red Kite *Milvus milvus* (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2010a). Occurrences have increased in frequency in recent years; there were 27 during 2007–2016, but only nine during 1997–2006.

(Nominate *migrans* breeds throughout most of Europe except the far north; winters in sub-Saharan Africa. Other subspecies elsewhere in the Old World.)

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*
29: 4: 3

Table 10. Accepted records of Stone-curlew in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Highland** Balnakeil, Sutherland, adult, 28–30 May, photo (A. Gergaud, B. Iliou *et al.*).
Moray & Nairn Kintessack, Forres, adult, 25 June (R. Potter).
Orkney Sangar, North Ronaldsay, 30 May, photo (C. Azahara *per* Local Recorder).

Stone-curlew is a very rare visitor to Scotland; there were just 33 accepted records to the end of 2014 with half of these in the Northern Isles, and the remainder scattered across the country, though mostly along the east coast. There is a peak in occurrence in late May and early June. The species was last recorded in Scotland in 2014.

It is interesting, but unexplained, why the few recent mainland records have been mostly in the northern half of the country. A Stone-curlew in southern Scotland would be appreciated by many observers.

(Nominate *oedicnemus* breeds in open habitats in southern Europe east to the Caucasus, extending as far north as England and Poland; migrates south to winter in Spain and North Africa. Five other subspecies.)

Plate 97. Stone-curlew, Sangar, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 30 May 2016. © *Carmen Azahara*

Plate 98. White-rumped Sandpiper, adult, Eochar (Iochdar), South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 1 June 2016. © *Ian Thompson*

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*
69: 83: 3

Table 11. Accepted records of White-rumped Sandpiper in Scotland, 2016, with additional records from 2015 and 2011.

2016: **Angus & Dundee** Rossie Spit, Montrose Basin, adult, 2–5 August, photo (H. Bickerstaff *et al.*).
North-east Scotland Greyhope Bay, Girdle Ness, adult, 10–19 August, photo (M. Lewis *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Eochar (Iochdar), South Uist, adult, 1 June, photo (I.R. Thompson).
2015: **North-east Scotland** Loch of Strathbeg, first-calendar-year, 18 October to 1 November, photo (P.A.A. Baxter *et al.*).
2011: **Outer Hebrides** Sgarasta (Scarista), Harris, two, first-calendar-year, 8 November, photo (M. Scott *et al.*).

White-rumped Sandpiper is a scarce but annual visitor to Scotland from North America, with most observations in late summer and autumn on the Outer Hebrides.

(Breeds in North America at high latitudes, migrating to winter in Brazil, Argentina and Chile.)

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*
12: 21: 3

Table 12. Accepted records of Yellow-legged Gull in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Ayrshire** Barassie, adult, 24 November (B.D. Kerr).
Clyde Strathclyde Country Park, second-calendar-year/third-calendar-year, 1 January to 9 March, photo, same as **2015** (McGowan & McInerny 2017); same Carbans, 26 March, photo (D. Abraham).
Clyde Balgray Reservoir, adult, returning, 2–14 February (J.J. Sweeney); same Waulkmill Glen Reservoir, 7 November (J.J. Sweeney); same Balgray Reservoir, 9–28 November (J.J. Sweeney).
Clyde Balgray Reservoir, adult, 9–14 February (J.J. Sweeney).
Clyde Mount Vernon, Glasgow, first-calendar-year, 24 September to 29 October, photo (K. Hoey).

Plate 99. Yellow-legged Gull, first-calendar-year, Mount Vernon, Glasgow, Clyde, 24 September to 29 October 2016. © *Keith Hoey*

Yellow-legged Gull is very rare in Scotland, found throughout the country, usually in groups of other large white-headed gulls, often Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus*. Birds have been found at all times of the year, sometimes remaining for extended periods, with a number of individuals returning to the same locations in consecutive years.

Many Scottish records have been in south-west Scotland with the 2016 records fitting this pattern. Most have been adults, so it is encouraging that immatures are now also being identified.

(Nominate *michahellis* breeds mainly from south-west Europe east to the Black Sea, with immatures dispersing widely in winter as far north as Britain and the Baltic; *atlantis* breeds on the Azores, Madeira and Canaries, wandering south to north-west Africa.)

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* 0: 7: 2

Table 13. Accepted records of Caspian Gull in Scotland, 2016.

2016:	**Lothian** Skateraw, second-calendar-year, 23–25 February, photo (D. Foster, C. Scott *et al.*).
	Lothian Skateraw, second-calendar-year, 8–9 April, photo (K. Hoey *et al.*).

Caspian Gull is extremely rare in Scotland. Prior to 2016 occurrences have been in late autumn or winter, so the late February and April sightings are noteworthy.

It is now known that a regular movement of the species takes place each year through England, with most observations in the south and east. The majority are immatures present in summer and autumn. It remains very rare elsewhere in the UK. However, under-recording of this difficult-to-identify species is likely.

Most Scottish records have been in coastal East Lothian, amongst flocks of wintering gulls. The two immatures in 2016 fit this pattern.

(Breeds at inland lakes in eastern Europe and the Middle East, wintering mostly in the eastern Mediterranean, but with smaller numbers reaching western maritime Europe.)

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* 59: 17: 3

Table 14. Accepted records of White-winged Black Tern in Scotland, 2016.

2016:	**Moray & Nairn** Spey Bay, adult, 21 June (R. & S. Hamilton).
	North-east Scotland Meikle Loch, Collieston, third-calendar-year, 29–30 July, photo (P. Bloor *et al. per* Local Recorder).
	North-east Scotland Meikle Loch, Collieston, third-calendar-year/adult, 5 August, photo (P.S. Crockett *et al.*).

White-winged Black Tern is a rare visitor to Scotland, mostly observed along the east side of the country between late spring and late autumn. The species was not recorded in Scotland in 2015.

The two different birds at Meikle Loch, just six days apart, were established by plumage differences.

(Breeds on marshy lakes in central and Eastern Palearctic areas, migrating south to winter in Africa, Australasia and the Indian subcontinent.)

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* 34: 7: 1

Table 15. Accepted record of Alpine Swift in Scotland, 2016.

2016:	**Shetland** Fethaland, Mainland, 26 June, photo (C. Porter *et al.*).

Alpine Swift is a very rare visitor to Scotland, seen usually between mid-April and late July. Spring occurrences probably involve overshoots from breeding grounds on the European continent, while those in summer relate to wandering non-breeders. There are very few autumn records.

The Shetland bird, the only one seen in Scotland during 2016, with none observed in 2015, was found while the observer was taking a picnic with his family.

(Nominate *alba* breeds in north Africa and southern Europe from Iberia to the Middle East, moving to southern Africa in winter. Other subspecies in the Indian subcontinent and Africa.)

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*
86: 19: 2

Table 16. Accepted records of Woodchat Shrike in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Borders** Northfield, St Abbs, adult, male, 19–24 June, photo (L. Hunter, A. Sinclair *per* Local Recorder).
Fair Isle Nether Taft & various locations, male, 11–24 May, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Woodchat Shrike is a rare, almost annual, passage migrant to Scotland, with most in the Northern Isles. Adults and sub-adults are seen in spring as overshoots from their European continental breeding areas, along with dispersing juveniles recorded in autumn. The St Abbs sighting was the fourth for Borders, with the last in 1995.

(Nominate *senator* breeds from north-west Africa, Iberia, France and Belgium south to Turkey; *badius* on Mediterranean islands; and another subspecies from Turkey to Iran. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Plate 100. Woodchat Shrike, male, Nether Taft, Fair Isle, 11–24 May 2016. © *Lee Gregory*

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
286: 83: 4

Short-toed Lark is found annually in Scotland in very small numbers, mostly in spring and autumn, with the majority of observations in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally. It is very rare elsewhere, particularly on the mainland.

There were four occurrences in Scotland in 2016. Two were on Fair Isle, one during 2–8 May and the other from 14 September to 7 October; two were on Shetland, one on Out Skerries during 24–27 September and the other at Quendale, Mainland on 23 October.

(Eight or nine subspecies, with the subspecies seen in Scotland and the UK undetermined. Breeds widely in dry, sandy areas from southern and eastern Europe to the Middle East and western China, with populations migrating to winter in India, the Middle East and Africa.)

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*
68 (1950–2004): 24: 2

Table 17. Accepted record of Woodlark in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Shetland** Northdale, Unst, 12 November, photo (M.A. Maher, M.G. Pennington); same and new bird Haroldswick, Unst, 17 November (D. Cooper, B. Kay); same Northdale, 19 November (M.G. Pennington).

Woodlark is rare in Scotland, found mostly in late autumn and early winter in the Northern Isles. There has been one instance of attempted breeding, in Angus & Dundee in 1993 (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Since 1950 the vast majority of occurrences have been on the Northern Isles, with 70% on Fair Isle and Shetland.

There has been just one mainland occurrence since 2000, in Lothian in 2008.

(Two subspecies. *L. a. arborea* breeds in north and central European areas from western Russia through Finland and Norway to England, where present north to Yorkshire. The

other subspecies breeds from Iran and the Middle East through southern Europe to north-west Africa. Most populations move south to wintering areas, with more northerly populations moving the farthest.)

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*
40: 45: 1

Table 18. Accepted record of Red-rumped Swallow in Scotland, 2016, and additional record for 2011.

2016: **Fair Isle** Utra & Hesti Geo, second-calendar-year or older, 5–6 May, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).
2011: **Outer Hebrides** Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway), Isle of Lewis, two, adult and second-calendar-year, 14 May, photo (M. Scott *et al.*).

Red-rumped Swallow is observed in Scotland annually in small numbers from April through to November, mainly along the east coast and on islands. A small increase in frequency over the last 13 years or so is thought to reflect a northward expansion of the European continental breeding range. One individual of an eastern subspecies, either *daurica* or *japonica*, has been observed on Orkney and then Skye (Highland) in June 2011 (McGowan *et al.* 2013).

The single occurrence in 2016 represented the lowest annual total since 2002, and contrasts with a mean annual total of 3.6 birds over the last ten years. The early May date is typical of peak arrival. Fair Isle has 11.6% of the total Scottish records since 1950.

(Eleven or 12 subspecies. Breeds widely from southern Europe eastwards across the Palearctic region, and in sub-Saharan Africa. *C. d. rufula* breeds in Europe and the Middle East, with nominate *daurica* and *japonica* in Asia. Northern populations are migratory, wintering in Africa and southern Asia. In recent years its range has expanded into more northern and western European areas.)

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*
1: 1: 1

Table 19. Accepted record of Cetti's Warbler in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Location withheld** 8 October, trapped, photo (*per* Local Recorder).

Cetti's Warbler is an extremely rare vagrant to Scotland, with just two previous records, one dead and the other alive, from Lothian in October 1993 and the Outer Hebrides in October 2014 (McGowan & McInerny 2015).

The bird in 2016 was trapped, with its location withheld here to protect the site, which is very sensitive to disturbance. It could have derived from either the European continent, or from the English and Welsh population that has expanded rapidly to reach c. 1,800 singing males/territories in recent years following a peak of c. 2,000 ten years ago (Holling *et al.* 2016).

(Nominate *cetti* breeds in southern Britain, and eastwards from Morocco through to Bulgaria; mainly sedentary. Two other subspecies in central and eastern Asia Minor and from Kazakhstan to western China.)

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
157: 84: 17

Table 20. Accepted records of Greenish Warbler in Scotland, 2016 and an additional record for 2015. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 21.

2016: **Fife** Kilminning, 23 August (W. Cresswell *et al.*).
Isle of May first-calendar-year, 25 August, trapped, photo (M. Martin *et al.*).
North-east Scotland Forvie, first-calendar-year, 19–20 August, photo (H. Addlesee *et al.*).
2015: **North-east Scotland** Loch of Strathbeg, first-calendar-year, 25 August, photo (P.A.A. Baxter).

Greenish Warbler is a rare but annual migrant to Scotland, increasingly regular over the past few decades. It is mostly seen in late August and early September, with more than 80% of sightings in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally. There was only one spring occurrence in 2016, at Skaw, Whalsay, Shetland on 5 June.

Table 21. Accepted records of Greenish Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2016.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	5	-	19 Aug–5 Sep
Orkney	-	4	-	20 Aug–8 Oct
Shetland	1	4	5 Jun	19 Aug–30 Sep

(*P. t. viridanus* breeds from the Baltic east through Russia to the Yenisei and south to Afghanistan, and winters in the Indian subcontinent and south-east Asia. There are four records in England of Two-barred Greenish Warbler *P. t. plumbeitarsus* from eastern Siberia.)

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*
46: 21: 5

Table 22. Accepted records of Radde's Warbler in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Fair Isle** Chapel Plantation, 2 October, photo (K. Kelly *et al.*).
Isle of May 6 October, trapped, photo (C. Southall *et al.*).
Lothian Skateraw, 16 October, photo (E. Forbes).
Shetland Norwick, Unst, 27 September, photo (C. Auld, E. Marsh, D. Wilson *et al.*).
Shetland Burns, Foula, 2 October, photo (P.V. Harvey, M.A. Maher, R. Riddington, R.M. Tallack, B.H. Thomason).

Plate 101. Radde's Warbler, Skateraw, Lothian, 16 October 2016. © *Ewen Forbes*

Radde's Warbler is a rare late autumn visitor to Scotland, with the majority of occurrences in the Northern Isles, principally Shetland, and the remainder along the east coast. The five seen in 2016 was the highest total since six in 2010. The sighting in Lothian was only the second for the recording area, the first being in 1990.

(Breeds from southern Siberia east to Sakhalin and North Korea; migrates to winter in southern China and south-east Asia.)

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
60: 37: 13

Table 23. Accepted records of Dusky Warbler in Scotland, 2016. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 24.

2016: **Borders** St Abb's Head, 16 October, photo, (D.K. Graham *et al.*).
Isle of May 12 October (D. Steel).
Lothian Barns Ness, 16–21 October, photo (I.J. Andrews *et al.*).

Dusky Warbler is a rare but more or less annual visitor to Scotland, with the autumn migration period accounting for all records but one. Like Radde's Warbler, it occurs mainly in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally. Nearly all other sightings have been on the east coast.

Table 24. Accepted records of Dusky Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2016.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	1	-	12 Oct
Orkney	-	1	-	22 Oct
Shetland	-	8	-	28 Sep–3 Nov

The 13 sightings in 2016 were a record annual total and only the second year in which the total reached double figures; there were 11 in 2011. Sightings on the Isle of May, in Borders and in Lothian were third, fourth and fifth occurrences for the respective recording areas. In contrast, a bird at Burravoe, Yell, was the 60th for Shetland.

(Breeds from western Siberia to China, wintering from the Himalayas to south China; two subspecies, with European vagrants belonging to nominate *fuscatus*.)

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* 193: 78: 4

Subalpine Warbler occurs annually in Scotland as a rare migrant, mainly in spring. The overwhelming majority are seen in the Northern Isles.

All records to subspecies level are currently assessed by BBRC (Appendix 2). Subalpine Warbler *sensu latu* is assessed by SBRC apart from the Northern Isles where it is reviewed locally.

Table 25. Accepted records of Subalpine Warbler in Scotland, 2016 (*per* Holt *et al.* 2017, and local committees).

2016: **Shetland** Hamister, Whalsay, female, 8 May, photo (B. Marshall).
Shetland South Biggins, Foula, second-calendar-year or older, male, 10 May, photo (D. & G. Atherton), *iberiae/inornata*.
Shetland Soberlie, Foula, female, 11–12 May, photo (D. & G. Atherton).
Shetland Ristie, Foula, male, 22–26 May, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*), *iberiae/inornata*.

Two of the four Shetland occurrences were accepted at species level, and two were accepted as 'Western Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. iberiae/inornata*.

One record for 2016 was assessed by SBRC, a second-calendar-year male at Kinnabus, The Oa, Islay (Argyll) on 16 May. This was determined as either 'Western Subalpine Warbler' or Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler *S. subalpina*, and as not identified to species is excluded from the species total (Appendix 1).

Similarly, it should be noted that three individuals on Fair Isle in May 2016 were also only determined as 'Western Subalpine Warbler' or Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler (Holt *et al.* 2017).

(Nominate *cantillans* breeds in south Italy and Sicily, *albistriata* from south-east Europe through Greece, Aegean Islands to Turkey, *iberiae* in Iberian Peninsula, south France and North-west Italy, *inornata* from Morocco to Libya. Migrates to winter in the sub-Saharan Sahel, though *inornata* probably north-west Africa.)

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* 46: 98: 11

Table 26. Accepted records of Blyth's Reed Warbler in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Fair Isle** Mid Geo & Skadan, first-calendar-year, 28 August, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).
Fair Isle Haven & Observatory, first-calendar-year, 2 October, trapped, photo (C.J. Dodd, D. Parnaby *et al.*).
Fair Isle Observatory, first-calendar-year, 6 October, trapped, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).
Isle of May first-calendar-year, 5 October, trapped, photo (T. Southall, I. Livingstone).
Orkney Lettan, Sanday, first-calendar-year, 8 October, photo (D. Douglas, M. Lewis *et al.*).
Shetland Northdale & Norwick, Unst, first-calendar-year, 22 September to 4 October, photo (N.C. Crouch *et al.*).
Shetland Houlland, Baltasound, Unst, 25 September to 5 October, photo (C. Barton, P. Bloor, P. Crockett, I. Gordon *et al.*).
Shetland Quendale, Mainland, 2 October, photo (D. Houghton *et al.*).
Shetland Bruray, Out Skerries, first-calendar-year, 6 October, photo (P. Forrest, M.J. McKee, C.J. Turner).
Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, first-calendar-year, 9–16 October, photo (J. Dunn *et al.*).
Shetland Uyeasound, Unst, first-calendar-year, 20–29 September, photo (P.R. French, G. Gough *et al.*).

Assessment of Blyth's Reed Warbler was undertaken by BBRC until 1 January 2015. A recent significant increase in numbers seen in Britain means that the species no longer meets criteria for consideration by BBRC and is instead reviewed by SBRC. However, from 1 January 2017 the species will be assessed by local committees on Shetland and Fair Isle (Appendix 2).

Plate 102. Blyth's Reed Warbler, first-calendar-year, Mid Geo & Skadan, Fair Isle, 28 August 2016. © *Lee Gregory*

Plate 103. Blyth's Reed Warbler, first-calendar-year, Bruray, Out Skerries, Shetland, 6 October 2016. © *Mike McKee*

Blyth's Reed Warbler is a rare but annual spring and autumn migrant to Scotland, increasingly seen since 2000. Although the first Scottish record dates from 1910, 68% of occurrences have been in the last decade. The overwhelming majority of sightings (88%) have been in the Northern Isles. The sighting on the Isle of May was the fourth for the recording area. While most occurrences are in September and October, there have been an increasing number of spring singing males over the last several years.

A sighting at Logie Buchan, North-east Scotland on 30 August 2014 has been accepted by BBRC (Holt *et al.* 2017); the total in the header has been adjusted accordingly.

The increasing frequency of the species in Scotland follows a westward spread from European Russia through southern Finland, Estonia and Latvia, with breeding also recorded in Sweden and Poland (BirdLife International 2017).

(Breeds from Sweden, Finland and Baltic countries, through Russia to Lake Baikal and Mongolia, and south to Iran and north Pakistan; migrates to winter in the Indian subcontinent and Myanmar.)

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

many: *c.* 342: 19

Table 27. Accepted record of Marsh Warbler in Scotland, 2016. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 28.

2016: Argyll The Glebe, Scarinish, Tiree, male, singing, 4 June, sound recording (J. Bowler, K. Gillon).

Marsh Warbler is a scarce annual migrant to Scotland with most occurrences involving singing males in late spring; very rarely, birds remain to breed. The Northern Isles account for the overwhelming majority of records, and these are assessed locally.

The sighting in Argyll was the fourth for the recording area; all have been on Tiree.

Table 28. Accepted records of Marsh Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2016.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	4	1	31 May–6 Jun	29 Aug
Orkney	2	2	30 May–6 Jun	25 Aug–17 Sep
Shetland	5	4	28 May–30 Jun	23 Aug–22 Sep

The 19 Marsh Warblers recorded in Scotland in 2016 was lower than the annual mean of 32.5 between 2006 and 2015. The fluctuating annual abundance of this species is related, for spring birds at least, to variation in the prevalence of easterly winds in late May and early June, which are presumed to cause them to overshoot their breeding grounds in Fennoscandia during northerly spring migration (Forrester *et al.* 2007). As is usual, most birds in 2016 only stayed for a few days. One individual, trapped and ringed on 4 June on North Ronaldsay, Orkney was re-trapped on Fair Isle on 10 June; the second observation is thus not double-counted in the species totals. Breeding has been recorded at Norwick, Unst, Shetland in 2005, 2008 and 2014 (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2010, McGowan & McInerny 2016). As well as the singing male in Argyll, three others were heard in Shetland.

(Breeds in Britain, France, Denmark and Fennoscandia east through Europe to Russia; winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
139: 21: 3

Nightingale is a rare, but almost annual, passage migrant to Scotland; spring records predominate. In the Northern Isles, claims are assessed locally, and Fair Isle and Shetland account for the vast majority of sightings.

There were three occurrences in 2016, all in the Northern Isles. The first was seen on Fair Isle on 11 May. On Shetland one was seen at Punds, Foula on 20–22 May, and another at Still, Fetlar on 4 June.

There has been a total of 11 sightings in the last three years, one more than the inclusive total for Scotland during 2007 to 2013.

(Nominate *megarhynchos* breeds from Morocco and western Europe through North Africa and southern and central Europe to the Ukraine and Turkey; *L. m. golzii* from the Aral Sea to Mongolia; and another subspecies from the Caucasus area and eastern Turkey to Iran. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
105: 86: 3

Table 29. Accepted records of Citrine Wagtail in Scotland, 2016.

2016:	**Fair Isle** Meadow Burn & Da Water, first-calendar-year, 13 September, photo (C.R. Hatsell *et al.*). **Isle of May** second-calendar-year, female, 10–11 May, photo (M. Newell, B. Outram, D. Steel *et al.*). **Outer Hebrides** Poll na Crann ('Stinky Bay'), Benbecula, first-calendar-year, 26 September, photo (S.E. Duffield *et al.*).

Assessment of Citrine Wagtail was undertaken by BBRC until 1 January 2015. A recent significant increase in numbers in Britain means that the species no longer meets criteria for consideration by BBRC and is assessed by SBRC (Appendix 2).

Citrine Wagtail is a rare but annual spring and autumn migrant to Scotland, increasingly regular since the 1990s, and found mostly on islands. The first two records were in 1954, but 71% of sightings have taken place in the last two decades. The overwhelming majority (85.6%) have been in the Northern Isles, with a further 6.7% in Outer Hebrides. Occurrence is generally in autumn, with few records in spring. Despite the recent increase in numbers, Citrine Wagtail remains an extreme rarity in other parts of the country. On the Scottish mainland it has been recorded six times in Lothian and twice in North-east Scotland. But elsewhere it has been sighted only once in Inverness and Sutherland (both Highland) and Dumfries & Galloway and is unrecorded in another ten recording areas.

Plate 104. Citrine Wagtail, first-calendar-year, Poll na Crann ('Stinky Bay'), Benbecula, Outer Hebrides, 26 September 2016. © *Steve Duffield*

The Isle of May occurrence is the third for the island, and the sighting on Benbecula the 13th for Outer Hebrides.

(Nominate *citreola* breeds in Russia from Kola Peninsula to River Khatanga, south to Himalayas; another subspecies south of Tien Shan Mountains. Migrates to winter in China, South-east Asia, north of the Indian subcontinent and shores of Arabian Gulf.)

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
151: 169: 16

Table 30. Accepted records of Olive-backed Pipit in Scotland, 2016. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 31.

2016: **Borders** St Abb's Head, 13 October, photo (S. Gillies *et al.*).
Isle of May 13–15 October (D. Steel *et al.*).
Lothian Seacliff, 24 April, photo (C.N. Davison, K. Gillon *et al.*).
Lothian White Sands, 8 October (A. Brown).
Outer Hebrides Àird Mhòr (Ardmhor), Barra, 6 October (I. English).

Olive-backed Pipit is a rare but regular autumn migrant in Scotland. There was a marked increase in occurrences in Britain and Europe since the 1980s. Hence, the species was dropped from BBRC review in 2013, when it was considered by SBRC, but since 2015 was assessed locally in the Northern Isles (Appendix 2).

The vast majority of sightings in Scotland are in the Northern Isles, with only 21 birds (6%) seen in other areas.

Table 31. Accepted records of Olive-backed Pipit in the Northern Isles, 2016.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	4	-	23 Sep–20 Oct
Orkney	-	1	-	16 Oct
Shetland	-	6	-	24 Sep–18 Oct

The two sightings in Lothian and one in Borders were the first for the mainland since 2006, and increased the total number of mainland records to just ten birds. Totals for the Isle of May, Outer Hebrides and the Borders have increased to seven, five and two, respectively. The Lothian spring record matches the earliest previous date (Fair Isle in 1995) and is only the eighth in spring for Scotland.

(*A. h. yunnanensis* breeds from Urals east to Kamchatka, Manchuria and Japan; one other subspecies. Winters in south-east Asia.)

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*
366: 110: 15

Arctic Redpoll is a scarce though annual visitor to Scotland. Most sightings since 2005 have involved the race *C. h. hornemanni* (Hornemann's Redpoll), though many earlier occurrences referred to *C. h. exilipes* (Coues's Redpoll). All records to subspecies level are currently assessed by BBRC, while Arctic Redpoll *sensu latu* is assessed by SBRC apart from the Northern Isles where it is reviewed locally (Appendix 2).

No records were assessed by SBRC for 2016. A summary of records accepted by BBRC, all from Shetland, is provided here (*per* Local Recorder and Holt *et al.* 2017).

Table 32. Accepted records of Arctic Redpoll in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **Shetland** South Ness, Foula, 30 September, photo (D. & G. Atherton), *hornemanni*.
Shetland Norwich & Baltasound, Unst, 30 September to 20 November, photo (A.E. Chick, N.C. Crouch, P.R. Eele, P.R. French *et al.*), *hornemanni*.
Shetland East Burrafirth, Mainland, 6 October, photo (N. Harris, M. Ponsford, M. Willmott), *hornemanni*.
Shetland Uyeasound, Unst, 7 October, photo (A. Griffiths *et al.*), *hornemanni*.
Shetland Aith, Mainland, 7 October, photo (J. Holt *et al.*), *hornemanni*.
Shetland Out Skerries, 11–12 October, photo (P. Forrest, M.J. McKee, C.J Turner), *exilipes*.
Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 18 October, photo (M.G. Pennington, B.H. Thomason), *exilipes*.
Shetland Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, 21–29 October, photo (J.G. Brown, P.A. Harris *et al.*), *exilipes*.
Shetland Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, 24–31 October, photo (P.V. Harvey *et al.*), *exilipes*.
Shetland Baltasound, Unst, three, 24–25 October, photo (D. Cooper, B. Kay, M.G. Pennington), *exilipes*.
Shetland Baltasound, Unst, three, 13–20 November, photo (D. Cooper, M.A. Maher, M.G. Pennington), *exilipes*.

After a single record in 2014 and a blank year in 2015, 15 birds were seen in 2016. Five *hornemanni* were sighted between 30 September and 7 October, and ten *exilipes* between 11 October and 20 November.

(Breeds on the Arctic tundra, with a circumpolar range divided between two subspecies: *C. h. hornemanni* on Ellesmere and Baffin Island (both Canada) and in Greenland, and *C. h. exilipes* elsewhere. Winters to the south of the breeding range.)

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*
many: 46: 6

Table 33. Accepted records of Ortolan Bunting in Scotland, 2016.

2016: **At sea** 35 nm north-east of Peterhead, Buzzard Field, on *Osprey Explorer*, first-calendar-year, 19 August, photo (A. Williams).
Borders St Abb's Head, first-calendar-year, 8 October (D.K. Graham).

Ortolan Bunting is a rare and declining, but still annual, passage migrant to Scotland (Figure 1). In recent years the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally, have accounted for more than 90% of occurrences.

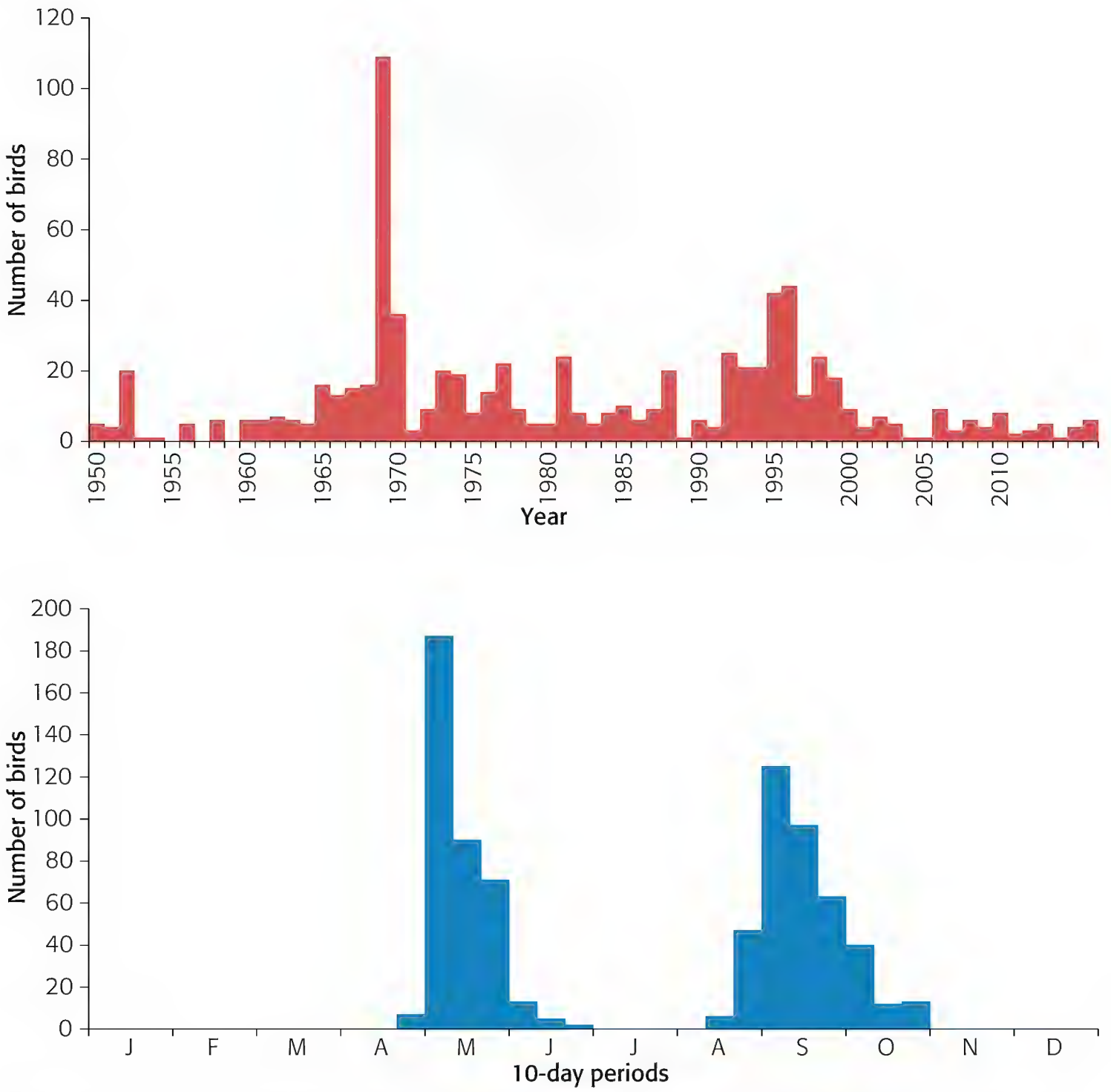

Figure 1. Annual and seasonal occurrence of Ortolan Bunting in Scotland by 10-day periods, 1950–2016.

The *Osprey Explorer* observation was the first 'at sea' record, with the bird in Borders the sixth for the recording area.

There were five sightings in the Northern Isles. On Fair Isle, one bird was seen on 11 May at Barkland, a second on 21 May at North Naaversgill and another during 8–18 September at Gilsetter and Field. On Orkney, one was seen at Howar, North Ronaldsay on 6–8 October, and on Shetland there was one occurrence at Spiggie and Brake, Mainland on 7–13 October. Excluding the 'at sea' record, which is not counted towards the total, these six sightings represent the highest annual total since eight in 2010. However, general trend of declining numbers over the last 17 years appears to be continuing.

(Breeds patchily from Algeria and Iberia north to Norway and east through Europe to Asia; winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*
593: 270: 106

Table 34. Accepted records of Little Bunting in Scotland, 2016. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 35.

2016: **Dumfries & Galloway** Leswalt, Stranraer, first-calendar-year, 21 October, trapped, photo (G. & J. Sheppard).
Isle of May 3 October, trapped, photo (C. & T. Southall *et al.*).
Isle of May 7–19 October, trapped, photo (T. Southall *et al.*).
Isle of May two, 8–11 October, photo (D. Steel *et al.*).
Isle of May 19 October, trapped, photo (B. Etheridge *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Creachan, Brèibhig (Brevig), Barra, first-calendar-year, 10 October, trapped, photo (M. Oksien *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Taobh a Tuath Loch Aineort (North Loch Eynort), South Uist, 17 October, photo (S.E Duffield *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Sgallairidh (Skallary), Barra, 4 November, photo (B.A. Taylor).

Little Bunting is a scarce but increasingly regular passage migrant to Scotland, mostly in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally (Figure 2). The great majority are found in autumn, but there have also been a few in winter and spring. Seven of the eight occurrences outwith the Northern Isles were on islands; the single mainland sighting, at Leswalt, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, was a first for the recording area. The increase in frequency in recent years has been dramatic; the mean annual total for the last ten years was 33.5, compared to 17.9 for the preceding ten-year period.

Plate 105. Little Bunting, Isle of May, 19 October 2016. © *Chris Southall*

Plate 106. Little Bunting, Taobh a Tuath Loch Aineort (North Loch Eynort), South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 17 October 2016. © *Steve Duffield*

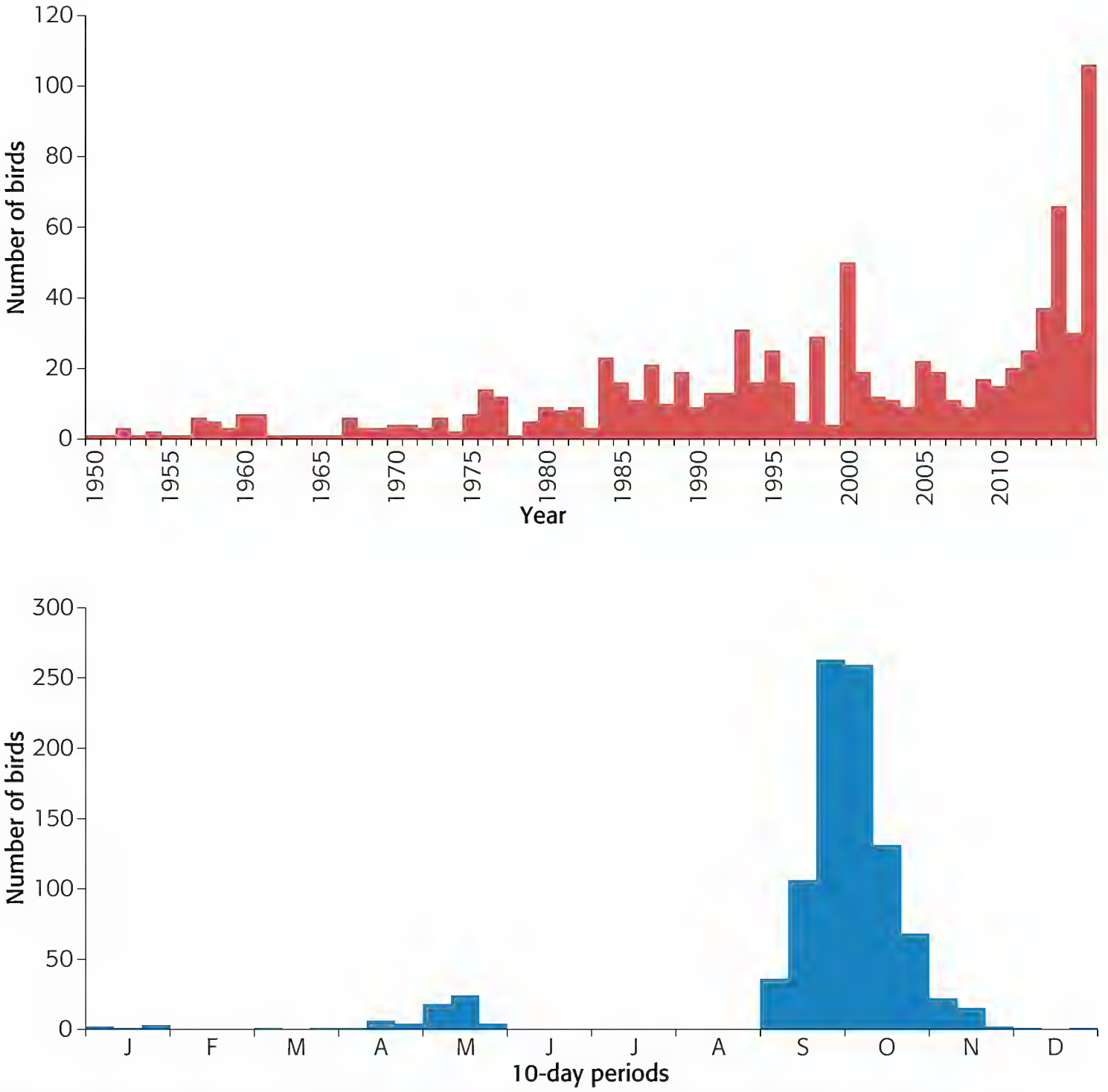

Figure 2. Annual and seasonal occurrence of Little Bunting in Scotland by 10-day periods, 1950–2016.

Plate 107. Little Bunting, Sgallairidh (Skallary), Barra, Outer Hebrides, 4 November 2016. © *Bruce Taylor*

In the Northern Isles there were a remarkable 97 sightings. The total of 70 in Shetland alone was higher than the previous record annual total for Scotland, 66 in 2014.

Table 35. Accepted records of Little Bunting in the Northern Isles, 2016.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	15	-	13–24 Oct
Orkney	-	12	-	2–17 Oct
Shetland	-	70	-	8 Sep–22 Nov

(Breeds from northern Fennoscandia to eastern Siberia; winters from north-east India and Nepal to south-east Asia.)

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Appendix 1.

List of records regarded as not proven by SBRC.

2016: **White-billed Diver** Kingsbarns, Fife, 28 March; **White-billed Diver** immature, Poolewe, Wester Ross, Highland 13 April; **White-billed Diver** (13) Mull Head, Papa Westray, Orkney, 10 November (6), 12 November (3), 17 November (1), 27 November (5+), 5 December (13), 27 December (5); **Cory's Shearwater** Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 25 August; **Great Shearwater** (2) Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 30 and 31 August; **Great Shearwater** Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 7 September; **Great Shearwater** (4) Lossiemouth, Moray & Nairn, 8 September; **Great Shearwater** Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 27 September; **Yellow-legged Gull** adult, Maidens, Ayrshire, 29 August; **Yellow-legged Gull** adult, River Forth, South Alloa, Falkirk, Upper Forth, 2 November; **Radde's Warbler** Kirbest, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 23 October;

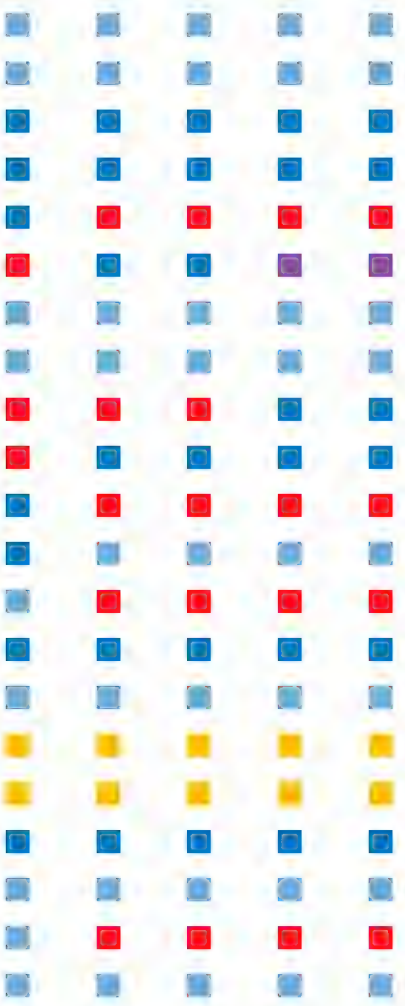
Subalpine Warbler second-calendar-year, male, Kinnabus, The Oa, Islay, Argyll, 16 May; **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Gulberwick, Mainland, Shetland, 6 October; **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Isle of May, 10 October; **Ortolan Bunting** first-calendar-year/female, Kirbest, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 28 September.

2015: Ortolan Bunting between Askival & Hallival, Rum, Lochaber, Highland, 7 September.

Appendix 2.

Summary of assessment of records by the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) and other committees, 2014–18. All species and subspecies assessed by SBRC are included, with two exceptions. First, any species or subspecies not on the *Scottish List* is automatically assessed by SBRC if it is not assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). Second, some species on the *Scottish List* have additional rare subspecies assessed by BBRC that are not shown here. Species and subspecies considered by BBRC are listed on www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/species-taxa

14	15	16	17	18	
■	■	■			Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*
■	■	■	■	■	Black Brant *Branta bernicla nigricans*
■	■	■	■	■	Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*
■	■	■	■	■	Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*
■	■	■	■	■	White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*
■	■	■	■	■	Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*
■	■	■	■	■	Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*
■	■	■	■	■	Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*
■	■	■	■	■	Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
■	■	■	■	■	Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
■	■	■	■	■	Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
■	■	■			Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
■	■	■	■	■	Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
■	■	■	■	■	Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
■	■	■	■	■	Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*
■	■	■	■	■	Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
■	■	■	■	■	Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
■	■	■	■	■	White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*
■	■	■	■	■	Continental Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa limosa*
■	■	■	■	■	Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* (except *L. m. atlantis* - BBRC)
■	■	■	■	■	Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*
■	■	■	■	■	White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
■	■	■	■	■	Franz Josef Land Little Auk *Alle alle polaris*
■	■	■	■	■	Alpine Swift *Apus melba*
■	■	■	■	■	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*
■	■	■	■	■	Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*
■	■	■	■	■	Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (except *L. s. badius* - BBRC)
■	■	■	■	■	Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
■	■	■	■	■	Woodlark *Lullula arborea*
■	■	■	■	■	Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* (except *C. d. daurica* or *japonica* - BBRC)
■	■	■	■	■	Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*
■	■	■	■	■	Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (except *P. t. plumbeitarsus* - BBRC)
■	■	■	■	■	Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*



Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans**
Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*
Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*
Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*
Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*
Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* (except *L. m. golzii* - BBRC)
Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*
Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*
Serin *Serinus serinus*
Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni**
Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*
Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*
Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*
Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*
Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*
Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

■ = SBRC ■ = BBRC ■ = SBRC except Northern Isles (Fair Isle, Orkney and Shetland) ■ = SBRC except Shetland and Outer Hebrides ■ = SBRC except Fair Isle and Shetland ■ = SBRC except Outer Hebrides ■ = SBRC outside core range www.the-soc.org.uk/content/bird-recording/sbrc/identification-of-scottish-and-parrot-crossbills

* Only birds not identified to any particular subspecies are considered by SBRC or local committees. Birds identified to subspecies are assessed by BBRC.

The species and subspecies considered by SBRC listed here are also shown on www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-list-past-lists

Appendix 3.

Corrections to previous SBRC reports:

Report year 2015
Citrine Wagtail: the caption for the photograph (Plate 86) should read '25–27 August'.

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Revised ms accepted March 2018

Plate 108. Adult Mediterranean Gulls including (on right) 3482695, Terminals, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 3 July 2017. © *Brian Henderson*

Variation in the post-breeding and wintering status of 12 individually marked Mediterranean Gulls at Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway in 2009–17

B.D. HENDERSON

Two hundred and ninety-nine sightings of 12 ringed Mediterranean Gulls were recorded around Loch Ryan from 2009 to 2017. Ringing details showed that they originated from Poland, Germany, the Low Countries, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Some exhibited strong site-fidelity traits and year-to-year connections with the study area and showed attachments to specific sites for variable periods. Others stopped off in the study area for short or long-stays. Departure and arrival dates were consistent with outward and return movements to breeding grounds and sightings of ringed juvenile and first-winter individuals coincided with the species' continued northward range expansion and an increase in monitoring.

Introduction

The Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* has greatly expanded its breeding and wintering ranges since the 1970s and, in Scotland, it is nowadays regarded as a regular but uncommon visitor (Bos 2005, Forrester *et al.* 2007) chiefly appearing outside the breeding season (Newton 2010). First seen in Dumfries & Galloway in 1978 (Dennis 1979) it is a scarce but increasing vagrant (Henderson & Chambers 2016) seen mostly at coastal locations with peaks of passage noted during post-breeding migratory movements especially around Loch Ryan where it is now regarded as an annual visitor in fluctuating numbers (Henderson 2014). Ringing of Mediterranean Gulls using metal rings started in earnest in Belgium and south-west Netherlands in 1989 (Meininger & Flamant 1998) and with coloured darvics in western Europe since 1990 (Flamant 1994), resulting in a wealth of detail on the migration and site fidelity patterns of individual birds.

The purpose of the paper is to report the post-breeding and wintering statuses of individually marked Mediterranean Gulls observed around Loch Ryan in 2009–17.

Methodology

The main study area is centred around Loch Ryan, which is situated on the eastern seaboard of the North Rhins; it is a shallow, natural anchorage approximately 13.3 km by 4.8 km at its broadest, orientated on a north-south axis with its mouth looking northward into the North Channel (Figure

Figure 1. Map of the study area around Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, detailing the main observation locations.

1). The main observation sites of Innermessan, Bishop Burn, Millburn and Soleburn are mouths of water courses which flow into the loch around the former Stena Line ferry port of Stranraer, on the southern and south-western shores of the loch. Sandmill is a shingle beach on the south south-eastern shore of Loch Ryan opposite a field in which the gulls roost at high tide. The other main observation sites were the disused former ferry terminal on the East Pier and at Port Rodie, both Stranraer, which are used by roosting gulls at high tide. Agnew Park, situated on the south-western shore of Loch Ryan, is a recreational area with a freshwater pond where several gull species congregate throughout the day. Rings were read using a Swarovski ATX 95 spotting scope or confirmed from hand-held digiscoped images using a Nikon Coolpix S9600 compact camera.

The majority of the resightings on Loch Ryan came from the author with additional supplementary records coming from other people. From 2009 to June 2014, 14 observers including the author contributed all known resightings of individually marked Mediterranean Gulls at Loch Ryan during visits to the loch. From July 2014, the eight main observation sites were visited on a daily basis by the author, except during periods of inclement weather. The roost sites at Sandmill, the East Pier, Port Rodie and Agnew Park were visited at high tide; the remainder (Innermessan, Bishop Burn, Millburn and Soleburn) were visited during two to three hours after high tide on the ebb working on a clockwise rotation. Daily observations continued to the end of October, thereafter 4–5 per week observations were made on an intermittent basis to late February. During March to the end of June, resightings were observed during general visits to the loch.

Other resighting records came from other people observing other sites elsewhere in Europe and ringing scheme coordinators of several European countries were contacted for additional resightings and for other information regarding breeding sites, stopover sites together with movement and wintering data.

Results

Twelve individually marked Mediterranean Gulls were recorded around Loch Ryan (Table 1). Eleven of them were ringed as pullus/chicks (Netherlands 3, Poland 2, Belgium 1, Germany 2, England 1, Northern Ireland 1 and Ireland 1) and one Belgium individual was ringed aged 3 years plus. Four additional individually marked individuals (three bearing metal rings and one with a darvic) were seen by the author; however, the rings were not read in the field.

Table 1. Individually marked Mediterranean Gulls resighted around Loch Ryan, ordered chronologically by ringing dates.

Ring details	Ringing date	Ringing location
FN10049 / Red 4P5	6 June 2007	Paczkowski, Kozielno, Paczk w, Poland
3656612 / White 35P6	6 June 2008	Veluwemeer, Hoogspanning, Netherlands
E912681 / White E107	24 May 2009	Total, Antwepen, Belgium
3693790 / White 32A4	24 June 2010	De Kreupel Island, Ijsselmeer, Netherlands
3482695	15 June 2012	Hoeckelingsdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands
E928141	17 May 2014	Prosper, Oost-vlaanderen, Belgium
5412126 / Green ANCZ	28 June 2014	Pionierinsel Lühe, Stade, Niedersachsen, Germany
EX02034 / Yellow 2X6N	8 June 2016	Inish Island, Lady's Island Lake, Wexford, Ireland
EZ66554 / Yellow 2XJ9	25 June 2016	Blue Circle Island, Larne Lough, Northern Ireland
IA177906 / Yellow AY CJ	19 June 2017	Lobnitz Gravel Pit, Sachsen, Germany
EY63527 / Yellow 2X8H	22 June 2017	Coquet Island, Northumberland, England
FS26447 / Red PUA5	19 June 2017	Zbiornik, Przykona, Turek, Poland

Six of the 12 individually marked Mediterranean Gulls recorded at Loch Ryan were resighted at 19 locations in eight other European countries, with one individual being resighted at five other locations in Scotland. The life histories including all winter, summer and stop-over resightings are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summarised life histories of individually marked Mediterranean Gulls that were recorded around Loch Ryan.

Ring Number	Year(s) resighted	Country	Location	First date observed	Last date observed	Total times observed
FN10049	2008	Ireland	Youghal	1 Mar	1 Mar	1
	2008	Netherlands	Sirjansland	10 Apr	10 Apr	1
	2008	Germany	Giessen	15 Jun	15 Jun	1
	2012	Ireland	Dublin	31 Jan	31 Jan	1
	2012	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**23 Nov**	**3 Dec**	**2**
3656612	2008	Netherlands	Veluwemeer	25 Jun	25 Jun	1
	2009	Ireland	Clahane	4 Aug	4 Aug	1
	2010	Wales	Aberaeron	26 Apr	26 Apr	1
	2010	Belgium	Lommel	14 May	14 May	1
	2010	Germany	Zwillbrocker	7 Jun	7 Jun	1
	2011	Germany	Zwillbrocker	4 May	4 May	1
	2011	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**19 Oct**	**19 Oct**	**1**
	2012	Germany	Zwillbrocker	7 Apr	7 May	3
	2013	Germany	Zwillbrocker	8 Apr	2 May	3
	2014	Germany	Zwillbrocker	25 Apr	5 May	2
	2014	Ireland	Ballymun	4 Oct	4 Oct	1
E912681	**2009**	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**5 Dec**	**5 Dec**	**1**
	2010	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**19 Dec**	**19 Dec**	**1**
	2011	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**16 Jan**	**16 Jan**	**1**
	2011	**Scotland**	**Castle Kennedy**	**5 Feb**	**5 Feb**	**1**
	2011	Belgium	Total	14 May	10 Jun	6
	2011	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**29 Jul**	**25 Nov**	**8**
	2012	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**18 Feb**	**9 Nov**	**6**
	2013	Netherlands	Oostburg	9 Mar	9 Mar	1
	2013	Belgium	Total	10 Jun	4 Jul	4
	2013	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**28 Jul**	**3 Nov**	**3**
	2014	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**3 Jan**	**14 Jan**	**3**
	2014	Belgium	Total	22 Mar	13 Apr	5
	2014	Netherlands	Philipsdam	22 May	22 May	1
	2014	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**17 Jul**	**30 Dec**	**18**
	2015	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**3 Jan**	**21 Feb**	**10**
	2015	**Scotland**	**Castle Kennedy**	**22 Feb**	**23 Feb**	**2**
	2015	Belgium	Total	8 Mar	7 Apr	14
	2015	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**21 Jul**	**20 Oct**	**29**
	2015	Ireland	Whitegate	13 Nov	13 Nov	1
	2016	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**5 Jan**	**22 Dec**	**34**
	2017	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**8 Jan**	**13 Oct**	**62**
3693790	2011	Ireland	Lady's Island Lake	6 Apr	6 Apr	1
	2011	Scotland	Port Seton	11 Aug	11 Aug	1
	2011	Scotland	Musselburgh	20 Aug	20 Sep	4
	2012	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**25 Feb**	**10 Mar**	**5**
	2012	Scotland	Port Seton	9 Aug	12 Sep	3
	2012	Scotland	Gosford Sands	16 Sep	16 Sep	1
	2013	Scotland	Motherwell	31 Jan	31 Jan	1
	2013	Belgium	Total	20 Apr	20 Apr	1
	2013	Scotland	Port Seton	6 Aug	31 Aug	3
	2014	Scotland	Musselburgh	29 Sep	11 Oct	2
	2015	Scotland	Glasgow	21 Feb	21 Feb	1
	2015	Scotland	Port Seton	16 Aug	12 Sep	4
	2016	Scotland	Port Seton	18 Jul	24 Sep	7

Post-breeding and wintering status of Mediterranean Gulls at Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway in 2009–17

Ring Number	Year(s) resighted	Country	Location	First date observed	Last date observed	Total times observed
	2017	Scotland	Glasgow	3 Jan	3 Jan	1
	2017	Scotland	Port Seton	18 Jul	11 Nov	15
3482695	**2015**	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**4 Jul**	**21 Aug**	**9**
	2016	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**19 Jul**	**15 Aug**	**7**
	2017	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**3 Jul**	**17 Sep**	**20**
E928141	**2014**	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**17 Jul**	**3 Sep**	**8**
	2015	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**13 Jul**	**7 Oct**	**9**
	2016	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**23 Jul**	**4 Sep**	**6**
	2017	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**14 Jul**	**26 Oct**	**34**
5412126	**2015**	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**20 Apr**	**22 Apr**	**2**
EX02034	2016	Ireland	Lady's Island Lake	11 Jul	11 Jul	1
	2017	England	Slimbridge	12 May	21 May	2
	2017	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**5 Jul**	**5 Jul**	**1**
EZ66554	2016	Northern Ireland	Gleanarm	6 Aug	6 Aug	1
	2017	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**17 Sep**	**30 Oct**	**6**
IA177906	**2017**	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**12 Aug**	**13 Oct**	**8**
EY63527	2017	England	Hauxley	16 Jul	16 Jul	1
	2017	**Scotland**	**Loch Ryan**	**18 Sep**	**18 Sep**	**1**
FS26447	2017	Poland	Zbiornik	27 Jun	27 Jun	1
	2017	Scotland	Stranraer	9 Nov	9 Nov	1

During the study, 299 resightings of 12 individually marked Mediterranean Gulls around Loch Ryan were recorded, of which 91% were resightings of three individuals: E912681, E928141 and 3482695, with E912681 accounting for 60% of all resightings. E912681, E928141 and 3482695 stayed for extended periods, nine others stayed for short periods with four staying only a single day.

Bishop Burn, the former ferry terminal on the East Pier, Millburn and Soleburn collectively accounted for 84% of all resightings of the individually marked Mediterranean Gulls in the study area. E912681 was resighted at 16 locations in the study area; the majority at Bishop Burn (57%) and within the high tide gull roost at the former ferry terminal (22%). E928141 was sighted at eight locations around Loch Ryan; 24% occurred at the former ferry terminal, Stranraer with 22% at both Millburn and at Soleburn. 3482695 was sighted at five locations around Loch Ryan; the majority (69%) came from within the high tide gull roost at the former ferry terminal, with 19% at Millburn and 5.5% at Bishop Burn. EZ66554 was resighted at three locations and IA177906 at four locations. The remaining seven individuals were resighted 13 times at six locations.

The mean first observation date of returning ringed Mediterranean Gulls to Loch Ryan was 16 July (range was 3 July to 28 July). The earliest observation date for E912681 was 17 July; mean was 21 July (range 17 July to 28 July). For E928141, the earliest observation date was 13 July; mean was 17 July (range 13 July to 23 July) and for 3482695 the earliest observation date was 3 July; mean was 9 July (range 3 July to 19 July). Latest date for E912681 was 25 February; mean last date was 2 February. The last recorded date for E928141 was 26 October; mean last recorded date was 26 September and for 3482695 the last recorded date was 17 October; mean last recorded date was 28 August.

Discussion

The post-breeding and wintering status of the 12 individually marked Mediterranean Gulls seen at Loch Ryan was variable; some individuals were resighted throughout each winter for successive years while others were resighted only occasionally and some very rarely. E912681's site-fidelity is reinforced by its age and continuing year-to-year connection to Loch Ryan, as interpreted by its nine-year life history. Ringed Mediterranean Gulls visiting Loch Ryan can be categorised into four groups: long-stay summer and winter, long-stay summer and autumn, short-stay summer and autumn, and short-stay winter, as similarly identified by Henson (2004). Earliest resighting dates at Loch Ryan in July coincided with peak movements of adult birds following post-breeding dispersal and migratory movements (M. Toms in Wernham *et al.* 2002).

Plate 109. Adult Mediterranean Gulls; **a)** E912681 (E107), Bishop Burn, Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, 21 July 2014. **b)** E928141, Agnew Park, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 23 July 2014. **c)** 482695 (with Black-headed Gull), Millburn, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 1 September 2017. © *all Brian Henderson*

A low number of individually marked Mediterranean Gulls were recorded around the loch prior to July 2014. Systematic daily monitoring from July 2014 was the result of the author relocating to Stranraer. All the main observation sites afforded good views of the gulls with the closest views being had at Bishop Burn, the East Pier, Millburn and Soleburn. Viewing opportunities away from the main observation sites were more restricted and the gulls generally more distant. Sites at the largest freshwater outflows (Innermessan, Bishop Burn and Soleburn) attracted the highest concentrations of gulls. A number of sites, especially those along the southern shores of the loch, were more prone to disturbance, especially at weekends.

Some early returning site faithful individuals, such as 3482695, undertook bonding rituals with other Mediterranean Gulls at the East Pier gull roost in early 2015 and 2017. E912681, E928141 and 3482695 stayed for variable periods in order to moult their primary feathers. Immediately upon renewal of their flight feathers, E928141 and 3482695 departed and were not resighted until the following year. IA177906 was seen just 54 days after being ringed as a pullus, having travelled 1,219 km from eastern Germany to Loch Ryan (A. Zours *pers. comm.*) suggesting rapid natal dispersal as similarly observed by Ellis & Shaw (1998). A marked increase in the number of individually marked juvenile and first-summer/winter individuals around the loch has coincided with an increase in post-natal monitoring

Plate 110. a) First-summer (2CY) Mediterranean Gull EX02034 (2X6N), Terminals, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 5 July 2017. **b)** Second-winter (2CY) Mediterranean Gull EZ66554 (2XJ9), Bishop Burn, Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, 27 September 2017. **c)** First-winter (1CY) Mediterranean Gull FS26447 (PUA5), Low Mye, West Freugh, Dumfries & Galloway, 9 November 2017. **d)** Juvenile/first-winter (1CY) Mediterranean Gull IA177906 (AY CJ), Millburn, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 1 September 2017. © *all Brian Henderson*

concurrent with the continued northward range expansion as shown in Bird Atlas 2007–2011 (Balmer *et al.* 2013).

Movements around Loch Ryan suggest a range of site faithfulness; some wander short or longer distances within the study area, whilst others only use the area as a staging post during migration. Some short-stay immature birds mixed freely with other gull species. Some one-day birds were probably transient individuals. This study clearly showed that some Mediterranean Gulls exhibited strong site-fidelity traits to Loch Ryan, often in successive years. However, the study also showed that some site-faithful individuals did not always overwinter around Loch Ryan in successive years and that the number of overwintering birds was low.

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Plate 111. Siskin, Aboyne, North-east Scotland, April 2012. © *Harry Scott*

A Siskin year in a small suburban garden

R.S. CRAIG & T.W. DOUGALL

Background and methods

RSC lives in a detached bungalow on the south-eastern edge of Peebles, Borders. Since 1993, he has been ringing birds, largely in the rear garden. The main feeding and catching site measures c.14 m x 20 m, and consists of an L-shaped lawn bounded by decorative conifers and a privet hedge. These, and the house, provide shelter for three mist-nets (6 m, 9 m and 6 m) arranged in a [- pattern. Birds are attracted by a variety of hanging feeders. In 2016, there were 14 - five with sunflower hearts, four of mixed seed, two of peanuts, and one each of black sunflower, niger and fat-balls. The feeders are used in rotation, with usually four being cleansed at any one time.

Siskins don't breed in the garden, but do around Peebles. However, it is believed that most Siskins visiting the garden are migrants. Some ringed juveniles caught have moved in from Dumfries & Galloway within a few weeks of hatching. It soon became clear to RSC that his garden attracted this species, but in variable numbers annually, which was to be expected with an irruptive species (Table 1). In the five years 2011–15 totals ringed ranged from 375 to 1,602, and totals captured after having been ringed elsewhere (controls) have ranged from two to 30. However, 2016 was an exceptional year when 2,681 different Siskins were caught in the garden. Of these, 2,550 were newly ringed by RSC in 2016, 87 had been ringed by him in Peebles in a previous year, and a further 44 were controlled i.e. they had been ringed somewhere else. Many (870) birds were caught more than once in 2016 mostly up to eight times, but one bird 13 times, giving a total of 1,482 retrap events.

Ringing data were computerised by RSC using the BTO's Integrated Population Monitoring Reporter (IPMR), and reports of any of these birds found elsewhere, as well as of birds ringed elsewhere and recaptured in Peebles were notified by e-mail from the BTO Demography Unit. TWD offered to look at this catch in more detail, and the findings are presented here. 2011 is not comparable to the other years since RSC was absent from February to May inclusive, missing the spring passage period.

Table 1. Comparative numbers of captures and effort in Siskin ringing at Peebles, 2011–16.

Year	January New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	February New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	March New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days
2011	29	0	0	18	12	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0	9	3	0	1	10	29	1	0	15
2013	1	0	1	16	5	0	1	22	18	0	5	13
2014	51	1	29	17	23	1	13	14	262	13	95	27
2015	21	1	48	18	22	0	11	17	30	0	11	17
2016	29	1	31	13	80	0	44	23	147	7	55	29

Year	April New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	May New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	June New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days
2011	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	205	1	7	18
2012	88	1	3	24	118	2	17	20	113	2	14	16
2013	68	1	4	20	203	4	36	27	20	0	8	15
2014	246	6	84	27	157	3	99	24	172	1	71	21
2015	1	0	0	9	3	0	10	15	10	0	8	15
2016	586	18	193	30	530	13	272	26	355	8	234	28

Year	July New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	August New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	September New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days
2011	142	1	7	27	13	0	1	16	43	0	11	17
2012	524	0	329	27	181	1	215	30	399	6	376	26
2013	54	3	25	20	234	0	193	29	257	3	262	23
2014	93	1	63	29	93	2	104	25	21	0	20	29
2015	97	0	51	26	34	1	62	25	74	0	73	25
2016	607	6	429	31	82	0	82	28	82	0	77	26

Year	October New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	November New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days	December New	Control	Retrap event	No. of days
2011	1	0	0	18	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	11
2012	145	1	99	27	1	0	6	14	1	0	0	13
2013	88	1	75	18	15	0	27	15	11	0	7	10
2014	0	0	2	16	11	0	19	19	10	1	24	20
2015	42	1	28	26	17	0	18	13	24	0	30	20
2016	46	0	48	27	9	0	17	23	4	0	9	9

Total no. of days annually: 2011 = 138; 2012 = 231; 2013 = 228; 2014 = 268; 2015 = 226; 2016 = 293.

Results

What was the pattern of occurrence of Siskins in RSC's garden in 2016? Data were analysed in terms of 10-day periods each month. For all handlings, there are two main peaks, in the spring, with maxima of 363 in period 13 (first 10 days of May) and 395 in period 19 (first 10 days of July) (Figure 1). The same pattern is repeated looking only at individuals new for that period (peaks 325 and 334 respectively); and only at individuals for the year on their first occurrence (274 and 244). There is a distinct trough in period 16 (first 10 days of June) with 50 or fewer handlings. Prior to period 8 (mid-March), and after period 22 (early August) fewer than 50 birds are encountered, with hardly any after mid-October. There were no new captures after mid-July of birds ringed elsewhere, and by this time 86% of new birds for the year had been ringed rising to 92.5% by the end of period 22.

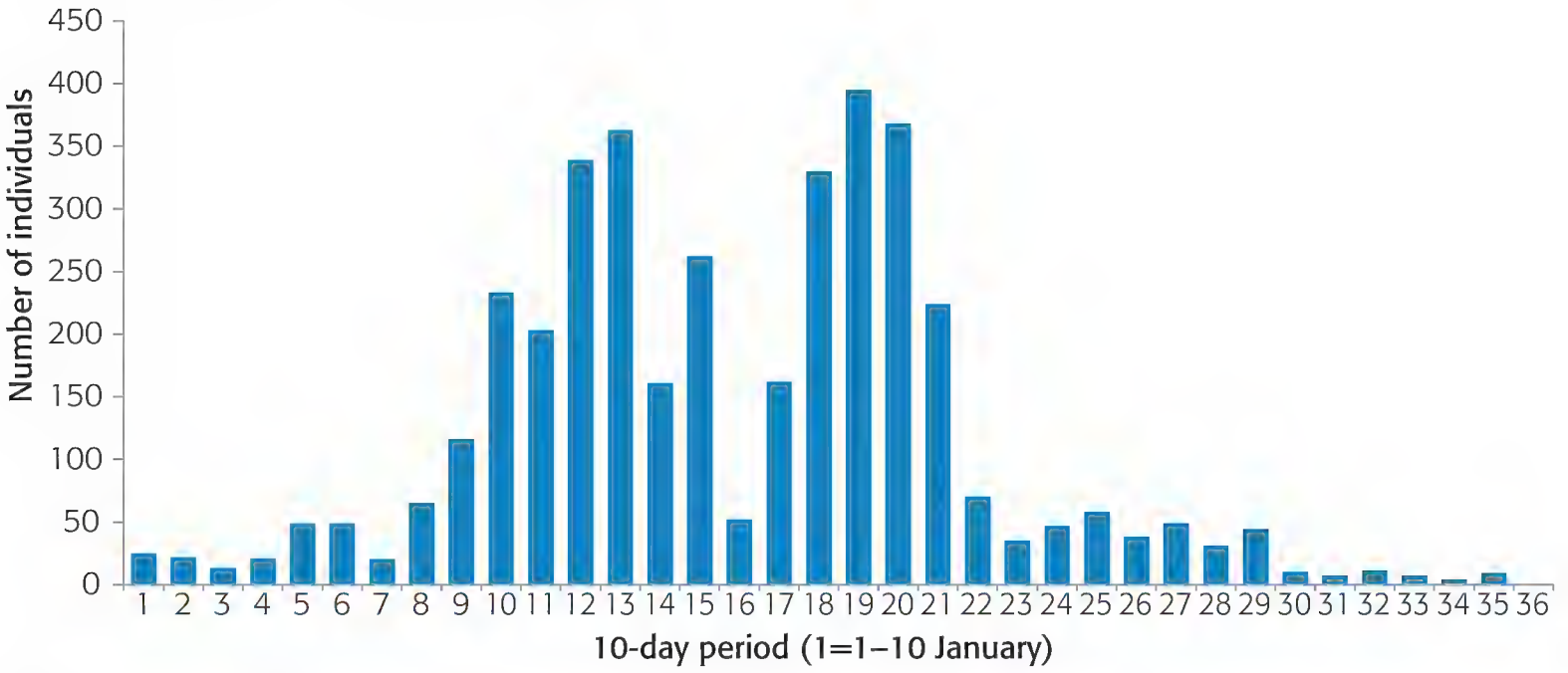

Figure 1. Frequency of Siskins by 10-day periods, Peebles, 2016.

Table 2. Locations involved in movements of Siskins to and from Peebles in 2016.

Number from Peebles to location in next column	Location (local government area)	Number to Peebles from location in previous column	Totals
8	Highland	4	12
2	Argyll & Bute	2	4
0	Central	1	1
1	North Lanarkshire	0	1
3	Borders	0	3
1	Dumfries & Galloway	1	2
3	Northumberland	2	5
0	Redcar & Cleveland	1	1
0	North Yorkshire	1	1
0	Lincolnshire	2	2
1	Cheshire	1	2
0	Conwy	1	1
1	Staffordshire	8	9
0	Norfolk	3	3
5	Suffolk	6	11
0	Powys	1	1
0	Northamptonshire	1	1
0	Gloucestershire	1	1
0	Essex	2	2
0	West Berkshire	2	2
1	Surrey	1	2
0	Kent	1	1
0	Hampshire	1	1
2	BELGIUM	1	3
28	Totals	44	72

It appears that passage was largely over by this time and was confined to spring and early summer. Of 678 new birds ringed in the last 10 days of June and the first 20 of July, 518 (76.4%) were juveniles and 63 (9.3%) were females, 62 of which exhibited a brood patch. The status of these brood patches was not recorded, so it cannot be stated with certainty if these birds were still breeding, or had finished and were on migration.

Of the 87 birds retrapped from previous years, males predominated (62). Of the 25 females, 16 had brood patches, but none was retrapped with a brood patch in more than one year. Of interest from these retraps was the occurrence of three birds ringed in 2012; some birds recurred every year; some appeared to be year-round residents; some which arrived in autumn or early winter (particularly in 2015) over-wintered and remained into the following spring - so a variety of strategies seem to be at play.

When catches were highest (peaks in early May and beginning of July) the proportion of retraps was low even though large numbers had just been ringed. This suggests a high turnover of birds, and is consistent with the idea that the nets were sampling a substantial transient population i.e. migrants. In contrast, over the winter period when catches were very low, the proportion of retraps was high and increased progressively as winter advanced.

This is consistent with the idea that winter catching was sampling a small, relatively resident population.

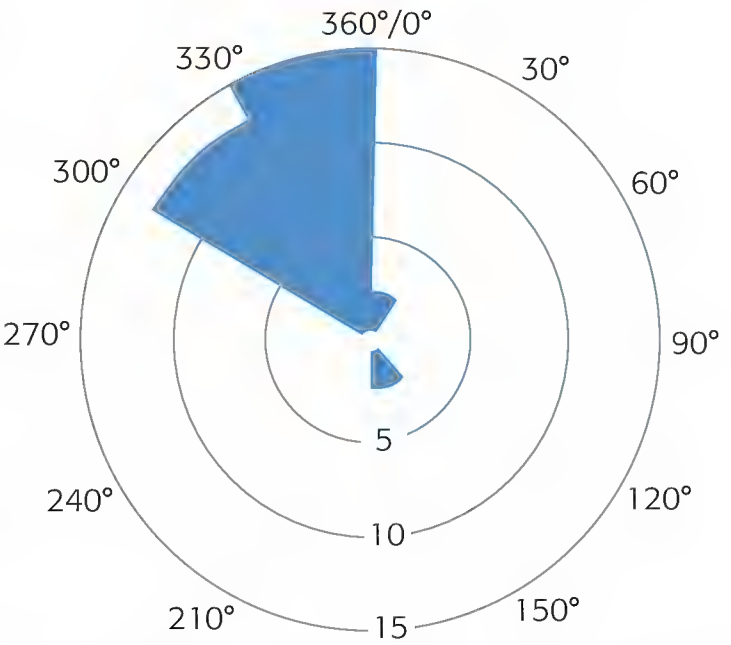

Figure 2. Orientation from ringing site of within-year movements (> 5 km) reported in Peebles, 2011–16.

Where have birds come from to the garden, and where did some of the garden-ringed birds go in 2016? Looking only at same-calendar-year movements of over 5km there are 32 birds which moved to RSC's garden and seven which have moved away from it. Of the seven birds, the two shortest movements of 20 and 24 km were orientated 199° and 118° respectively, while the remaining five (all of at least 114 km) were orientated between 304° and 348°. These latter correspond with 28 of the 32 controls which moved on headings between 300° and 360° to reach Peebles. Two others headed 004° and 009° from Wales, and the remaining two headed 165° and 168° from the Highlands, being found in Peebles at the end of June and early July, possibly *en route* further south, but still along the same general NNW/SSE axis of movements (Table 2, Figure 2). The earliest 2016 ringing date of a bird later found in Peebles was 10 January (in Peebles at the end of March) and the latest ringing date was 8 May (in Peebles in early July - one of the two southerly-heading birds from the Highlands); the latest ringing date south of Peebles of a bird subsequently caught at Peebles was 27 April (in Peebles at end of May).

When were these birds on the move, and how rapidly? Of the 32 movements to Peebles, 27 were of birds ringed between mid-February and early April, this same period accounting for four of the seven movements away from Peebles (the other three were between mid-April and mid-May). There are three instances of relatively rapid movements (10 days or fewer after ringing), all involving birds heading north towards Peebles:

Z594621: ringed 12 March 2016, Lake Vyrnwy, Powys;
controlled 21 March 2016, Peebles; 004°, 323 km, 9 days.
Y877423: ringed 27 March 2016, Kingsley, Staffordshire;
controlled 4 April 2016 Peebles; 346°, 303 km, 8 days.
Z668443: ringed 30 March 2016, Hednesford Hills, Staffordshire;
controlled 7 April 2016 Peebles; 347°, 337 km, 8 days.

Discussion

In *The Birds of Scotland* (Forrester *et al.* 2007) it is stated that the onset of breeding by Siskins in Scotland is determined by the conifer seed food supply, with breeding commencing in the Galloway forests during March in years of good Sitka Spruce cone supply, but with only half the females commencing breeding by May in poor cone years (Shaw 1990). McKenzie *et al.* (2007) showed that Siskin numbers at garden feeders were higher in years with poor spruce cone crops and that Siskins prefer to feed on cones rather than at garden feeders when cones are available.

Given the increased food supplies now provided all year round in many gardens, has this behaviour changed? Newton (1985, Table 3) describes the sequence of foods used by Siskins in northern Britain based partly on research conducted in 1968. The first peak of catches in Peebles is at a time when Siskins, in a natural situation, would be feeding on conifer seed (spruce and pine); and the second peak is when conifer seed runs out and the birds would switch to the seeds of herbs, before moving on to birch seed. In winter, Siskins would be feeding on the seeds of birch, Alder and Larch. If these crops were abundant in a particular winter in the Peebles area Siskins

might prefer these to food in gardens? Again, in the 50 years since some of this work was conducted, has increased availability of, and the species' fondness for, artificial foods affected this feeding regime? Francis & Cook (2011) suggest not, their more recent findings in north-east Scotland reflect Newton's, with breeding occurring early with when spruce seed was available but a month later when relying on pine seeds. Newton (2008) reviewed studies of irruptive seed eaters that migrate twice a year, such as Siskins. These species have flexible migration patterns and move according to variation in food availability. Siskins move north in spring to exploit spruce and Scots Pine seed, and then move again just after breeding, not necessarily southwards, but to exploit other food sources such as pine or birch seed.

The nearest coning data to Peebles in 2016 are from the Northumberland and Durham areas of the Forestry Commission North England Forest District (Paul Gough *in litt.*). Of the five sites surveyed, the crop for Larch was very low, Norway Spruce was nil, Sitka Spruce was low to medium and Scots Pine was low at one site and medium at another.

Further evidence for winter departure by Siskins from Scotland has been provided by the large number of rapid northward movements of birds ringed in England in spring (Wernham *et al.* 2002). There is no mention of direct evidence from ringing of southward departure from Scotland, and when it might occur. Very few Siskins are caught by ringers in autumn, which may indicate that they have abundant natural foods at that time of year so are not attracted to garden feeders.

Plate 112. Siskin, Aboyne, North-east Scotland, January 2008. © *Harry Scott*

The 2016 ringing year in Peebles has now provided some evidence that departure can commence as early as late June and early July. However, the scarcity of new birds in Peebles and the absence of ringed birds from further north in Scotland in late summer, suggests either that there was no mass exodus towards the south or, if there was one, it by-passed the Peebles garden.

Wernham *et al.* (2002) note that 87% of recoveries of Siskins ringed between 1909 and 1997 are from birds ringed in January to April, and 77% of Siskin recoveries occur in the same period. There is a need to ring more Siskins in the autumn and early winter to fill gaps in our knowledge of southward movements from Scotland. Unfortunately, the species is more difficult to catch at this time of year when the birds are very mobile as they exploit scattered sources of Alder and birch seeds.

Northward migration in spring seems to follow two strategies, some birds depositing fat reserves to fuel a long-distance migration, while others take a slower and stepped journey (Wernham *et al.* 2002). The fastest movement recorded in *The Migration Atlas* is at an average of 189 km/day from Shropshire to Highland Region; since estimates of flight ranges vary from 400 to 1,000 km (Wernham *et al.* 2002), it is possible that such a journey could have been made in a single flight.

Newton (2008) notes that the directional spread of movements of irruptive species such as Siskin could be as wide as 298°, whereas that of non-irruptive migrants would be in the order of 100°. Given the NNW/SSE axis of movements made by migrant Siskins through Peebles, it appears that they were not irruptive in 2016. There may be an element of bias here given the distribution of ringers within the British Isles. However, it links to the shortest sea-crossing to continental Europe, where many Siskins winter in the Low Countries. Perhaps the migration pattern is changing to one of moving along this axis, exploiting natural seasonal food sources where available, but switching to garden feeders when natural ones fail?

The above is merely a snapshot of one year within one garden - there is certainly more than meets the eye with the Siskins in your garden!

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Plate 113. Gular pouch angles: NMS.Z 1888.84.162 *sinensis* (left) and NMS.Z 1888.84.162b *carbo* (right), both Orkney, March 1873.

The first Scottish record of 'Continental Cormorant'

R.Y. MCGOWAN, T.W. DOUGALL & J.M. COLLINSON

The first claimed sighting of 'Continental Cormorant' *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* (hereafter *sinensis*) in Scotland was an adult at St Abb's Head, Borders in April 1986 reported by Alan Lauder (Forrester *et al.* 2007). However, at that time the identification criteria for *sinensis* had not yet been fully refined, nor was there a requirement to submit descriptions to the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC). The first accepted record was an immature bird at Loch Spynie, Moray & Nairn, studied at length by Bob Proctor and others from 26 December 1998 to 20 January 1999 (Proctor & Donald 2000, ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2010). At the end of 2012, the SBRC ceased consideration of claims of *sinensis* from Scotland, as the subspecies was considered sufficiently numerous to merit assessment by local rarity committees (McGowan & McInerny 2015).

In late August 2017, whilst assisting with cataloguing the bird skin collection at NMS, TWD noticed one particular skin of an adult Cormorant that exhibited a gular patch with a conspicuous right-angle (Plate 113.) Aware that this character may be used in separating *sinensis* from nominate *carbo*, and noting the year of the specimen's collection (1873), he drew RYM's attention to the skin. Following a brief referral to Baker (2016), both agreed to investigate the identification in depth the following week.

Diagnosis

The gular patch angle is generally accepted as a useful criterion for identifying *sinensis* by sight, though there are discriminant functions that can be applied to specimens (Baker 2016). These sex-specific discriminants were derived from analysis of biometrics of skins of known geographic origin which correctly classified over 98% of males and females to subspecies (Newson *et al.* 2004).

The skin discussed here (accession no. NMS.Z 1888.84.162) belonged to Robert Gray (1825–87), and had been collected on 30 March 1873 in Orkney. Although the specimen label did not indicate the sex, it was recorded as male in a catalogue of skins compiled around 1920. DNA was isolated from toepads and the sex determined genetically by PCR using the CHD1 M5/P8 primers (Bantock *et al.* 2008) as described in McGowan *et al.* (2013). The PCR produced a single product at 260 bp confirming the sex as male.

Biometrics were recorded for bill depth (mm) and bill length (mm) using dial calipers, and the angle of the gular pouch angle was measured using a protractor with reference to the figures in Newson (2004). Respectively, these were 11.3 mm, 67.8 mm and 88°.

The discriminant formula for males is 0.92133 x (bill depth) + 0.36504 x (bill length) - 0.50198 x (gular pouch angle), and values less than 4.66583 classify individuals as *sinensis* (Baker 2016). The formula for females is 0.87159 x (bill depth) + 0.56828 x (bill length) - 0.61081 x (gular pouch angle), with values below 4.87236 classifying as *sinensis*. The resultant value (male equation) was -9.0135, so the bird falls well within the *sinensis* group.

Plate 114. Extent of white feathering on the crown: NMS.Z 1888.84.162 *sinensis* (left) and NMS.Z 1888.84.162b *carbo* (right), both Orkney, March 1873.

Another adult specimen (NMS.Z 1888.84.162b) collected from the same place and on the same date is in the collection. The gular pouch angle of this bird is typical of nominate *carbo*. Using the relevant biometrics as a control (bill depth 15.0, bill length 68.7 and gular pouch angle 52°), this skin scored 12.795 (as male) and 20.389 (as female), thus classifying it as nominate *carbo*. Although the specimen had not originally been sexed internally, its wing length was c. 340 mm, and indicative of a female (Cramp & Simmons 1977, Baker 2016).

Whilst not a diagnostic feature *per se*, the extent of white feathering on the crown has been considered suggestive of subspecific identification, with *sinensis* tending to have more white, and nominate *carbo* less white (Cramp & Simmons 1977). The Orkney birds conformed with this feature, with the *sinensis* skin showing markedly more white (Plates 113–114).

In conclusion, the adult male specimen from Orkney, collected in 1873, satisfies the identification criteria for *sinensis*. Following consideration by SBRC, this bird was accepted as the first Scottish record.

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A previously unrecorded early ocurrence of the Goshawk in Caithness and additional information about another early record

In the first of their regional avifaunas Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1887) describe the Goshawk *Accipter gentilis* as 'almost entirely unknown in Caithness'. They note that it was included in the county's first list of birds prepared by C. Thomson (1845) which was based on the collection of bird skins made by E. Sinclair, the surgeon in Wick. In an updated version of the list published in 1863, R.I. Shearer says of the Goshawk 'very rare, never to my knowledge' (Clark & Sellers 2005). Other local ornithologists, notably H. Osborne, E.S. Mackay and W. Reid, make no mention of it in their writings (and all were fairly prolific writers about birds in Caithness) and, with the possible exception of Mackay, who had a Goshawk of uncertain provenance in his collection of skins, it seems that the species was also unknown to them as a Caithness bird. Harvie-Brown & Buckley do mention two records, the first concerning a bird preserved by Lewis Dunbar, the taxidermist in Thurso, and a more detailed one of a bird in the collection of F. Raine of Durham reported as having been trapped by J. MacEwan (*sic*; the family surname appears variously as McEwan or McEwen in the Census returns shown on the Scotland's People website, but never MacEwan) at Ousdale, Caithness on 2 December 1876. Given the paucity of information about the past status of this species both in Caithness and in Scotland generally (Petty 2007), it is worth putting on record some additional information about the first of these two records, and to highlight a third which has recently come to light.

First record. Lewis Dunbar corresponded with Harvie-Brown and from time to time sent him details of the more interesting birds that passed through his hands. One list of records, in the Harvie-Brown archive at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh, contains the following particulars about this bird: taken at Langwell, Caithness by D. Ross, keeper, date recorded simply as 'before 1878'. It is marked as being destined for 'Brawl Castle' (modern day Braal Castle near Halkirk, Caithness). Donald Ross is shown as the keeper at Langwell in the 1871 Census, but not that in 1861, and this effectively dates the record to the period between 1861 and 1878 (Scotland's People website). Why Harvie-Brown & Buckley did not include these details in their book is uncertain but possibly it was to protect the identity of the keeper, whose sideline in supplying Dunbar with specimens to sell on might, one suspects, have been frowned upon by the estate authorities.

Third (new) record. In Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, is the skin of a Goshawk, Accession No. 42–1927–12, labelled as a female taken at Berriedale, Caithness; it is undated. It is shown in the museum's records as an adult, the bird having apparently been aged by E. Blezard, a curator at the museum and a noted Lakeland ornithologist. The skin had formerly been part of the 'Edenhall Collection', begun in a modest way by Sir George Musgrave (1799–1872) of Edenhall near Penrith, Cumbria, and substantially added to by his son, Sir Richard Courtenay Musgrave (1838–81). Many of the specimens including the Goshawk were donated to the museum shortly after the Musgraves sold the estate in 1921 (Anon. 1927). The Edenhall collection contained at least 23 specimens from Caithness, many shot by Sir Richard himself around Strathmore (Anon. 1927). The Goshawk, however, is recorded as having been taken in a trap (Anon. 1927). It seems possible that it was acquired by Sir Richard in Caithness on one of his visits there, probably made between 1859 when Sir Richard came of age, and 1881 when he died.

Examination of the skin confirmed it as a Goshawk. Its upper parts were uniform brown with no sign of any rufous edges to the feathers, whilst those of the breast mostly had four 2–3 mm wide, brownish bands (three bands on the upper breast), which did not taper towards the edges of the feathers, typical of birds in their second year of life (Baker 2016). Techniques for separating second year birds from older ones were not available in the 1920s so this assignment is not inconsistent with the

Museum's records. The absence of wing moult indicates that it was almost certainly taken between September and March (Cramp & Simmons 1980). The skin had a wing length of 375 mm (natural chord), a tail length of 250 mm and a tarsus length of 84 mm, measurements which unequivocably establish it as a female. Moreover, they indicate that this was, for a female Goshawk, a rather large bird (Cramp & Simmons 1980), which, given that the subspecies found throughout most of the Western Palearctic, *A.g. gentilis*, shows a marked clinal variation in body size, larger in the north, smaller in the south (Cramp & Simmons 1980), suggests that it may have originated from the northern part of this area, most likely from Scandinavia. Adult Goshawks in Scandinavia are largely sedentary and recorded movements mainly involve immature birds. The presence of continental birds in Britain has been inferred from the occurrence of the species in coastal localities, either in the period before the species was re-established in Britain around 1950 and more recently from places such as Orkney and Shetland (see Wernham *et al.* 2002, Forrester *et al.* 2007). The only evidence from ringing for the presence of Scandinavian birds in Britain concerns a bird marked as a nestling in south-western Norway and retrapped four months later in Lincolnshire (Petty 2002).

In summary, the new third record refers to a bird which was a second-winter female probably from Scandinavia, and trapped at Berriedale, Caithness between September and March inclusive sometime between about 1859 and 1881.

Acknowledgements

I thank David Clarke and Steven Hewitt for information about the Edenhall collection, Simon Jackson, Curator at Tullie House Museum in Carlisle for allowing me access to the museum's skin collection and making available the Edenhall Catalogue, and to library staff at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh for permitting me to consult the Harvie-Brown archive.

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Wall-nesting urban Stock Doves in Glasgow

The Stock Dove *Columba oenas* has a restricted and fragmented distribution in Scotland, only found in the south and east of the mainland, though it is likely to be under-recorded (Forrester *et al.* 2007). It is thought to be largely resident, with little evidence of birds moving far from breeding areas and very small numbers noted at migration sites. Breeding is mostly reported from rural and agricultural areas with birds sometimes forming small colonies, mostly found nesting in holes in mature trees, although nests have also been reported more rarely in cliffs and rabbit holes, and pairs will use nest boxes. Similar nesting sites have been described in the rest of the UK and Europe, along with quarries and abandoned buildings (Cramp 1985, del Hoyo *et al.* 1997, Jardine 2000).

Against this background it is noteworthy that a colony of Stock Doves inhabits an urban site in the West End of Glasgow (Clyde). In March 2018 at least seven pairs used holes in a riverside wall to nest along the banks of the River Kelvin underneath Hamilton Park Avenue at NS5731767300 (Plates 115 and 116 a–b). The wall is about 60 m long and 12 m high, with large cavities used for nesting. It was built in the 19th Century and is partially overgrown with Ivy *Hedera helix* and surrounded and topped by European Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and European Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* trees. A dead Elm *Ulmus* spp. covered in Ivy is also present above the wall.

For a normally shy and wary species, the Stock Doves are unusually approachable at the site, allowing close views as they spend much time perching on branches next to nest holes, undergoing courtship and producing young (Plate 116 c–d). Apparently the birds have used this site for many years but have been overlooked (including by the author) as Feral Pigeons *Columba livia*.

The specific habitat features at the site that have allowed this colony of Stock Doves to establish in such an unusual urban location are not known. But the combination of mature trees, adjacent nest cavities and nearby water is reminiscent of some rural nesting sites elsewhere in Scotland and the UK (Brown & Grice 2005, Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Plate 115. Riverside wall next to the River Kelvin, Glasgow, Clyde, containing a colony of nesting Stock Doves, March 2018; arrows indicate Stock Doves. © *Chris McInerny*

Plate 116. a–b. Stock Doves nesting in a riverside wall next to the River Kelvin. **c–d.** Stock Doves next to the River Kelvin, Glasgow, Clyde, March 2018. © *Chris McInerny*

Whatever the reason it is encouraging that the species can utilize an urban landscape, as it is UK Amber Listed following recent population and range declines (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, BTO 2018). This note also alerts observers to scrutinize 'Feral Pigeons' in similar urban habitats, as more colonies of Stock Doves may exist elsewhere in Scotland.

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Raymond G. Hawley (1935–2017)

On 15 February 2017, Ray Hawley died in Glenrothes following a stroke, and so departed a superb ornithologist and natural historian, one of the UK's leading experts on Long-eared Owl and Honey-buzzard, and, to those who knew him, a true hero of field observation.

Ray was born in Sheffield on 17 January 1935. His deep interest in nature was first stimulated as a boy during wartime regular visits to an area of allotments with hedges and small ponds, full of nesting birds, frogs and newts. There too he collected caterpillars and in due course his mother was none too pleased to have a house full of Elephant Hawk Moths!

Cycling trips followed to the nearby moors and woodlands of south Yorkshire and Derbyshire. He joined Sorby Natural History Society and their trips to interesting places like Gibraltar Point and the old Nottingham Sewage Farm. From the age of 12, in woods and shelter belts near Sheffield, he studied breeding Long-eared and Tawny Owls, developing an intimate knowledge of their nesting habits and calls that is unsurpassed to this day. Back then Ray and his peers operated in a world without live nest cameras and detailed species monographs. Direct personal observation, experience and learning were everything, with reference to Witherby *et al.*'s *Handbook* for comparisons. This hands-on era spawned a shoal of first-rate, self-taught naturalists, many of whom went on to become well known figures in conservation, but few had greater field craft or knew more about their subject than Ray.

On leaving school he worked in an architect's office, before joining the RAF in 1954 for national service. Stationed at Harrogate, he met and married local lass Pauline Suttill, in 1959. In January 1972, he joined RSPB in Sandy to become warden at the Lodge. There, his knowledge, enthusiasm and reserve cemented firm friendships with Mike Everett, Richard Porter, Jim Dunbar and others, and where he was greatly admired as an outstanding field man. In 1974, he moved back to his native Yorkshire to become Warden of RSPB Hornsea Mere. Mike

Plate 117. Ray Hawley (left) with Richard Porter, 1988. © *Dave Dick*

recalls sea-watching near Hornsea when both picked up a small bird far out to sea but heading towards them. Ray called Jack Snipe and nodded in satisfaction as it fell out of the sky and dropped down into a garden nearby. Ray's birding also included lengthy trips to southern France, Turkey and the Greek islands.

In late 1980, he moved to Galloway to establish a new RSPB reserve on Hensol Estate near Castle Douglas. With limited resources Ray established good relations and set about habitat management, installing a sluice and ultimately building a hide! He had a draughtsman's eye and drawing skills, with a dash of the artist - all handy attributes in such a varied business. His knowledge, warmth, and unassuming manner inspired a band of volunteers who went on to form RSPB's Galloway Local Group and contribute to the pioneering *Bird Walks in Galloway*, which contains a comprehensive identification guide by Ray, and which was illustrated by him and Donald Watson.

Ray was a founding member of Dumfries & Galloway Raptor Study Group, and encouraged colleagues to look for the elusive and enigmatic Honey-buzzard, a species he'd known variously in Yorkshire, overseas and now in Galloway. Ray felt there must be other pairs in the heavily-afforested south-west, and his encouragement culminated in a detailed, illustrated field guide. The recent 'lifting of the veil' on the species in Yorkshire and his knowledge of

observations in Central Scotland, encouraged Ray towards wider circulation of his own notes, which reflect a lifelong and mostly unassisted study of these birds.

Ray's (1966) paper on the Long-eared Owl has become something of a classic and is still regarded as one of the best sources on the species. Heimo Mikkola in his *Owls of Europe* (1983) changed parts of this and introduced errors, corrected by Ray for *Raptors - a field guide for surveys and monitoring* (2007, TSO).

On my becoming RSPB Conservation Officer in Dumfries & Galloway in 1991, Ray provided friendship, support and shared his deep knowledge of the habits, habitats and calls of birds. I already knew many skilled ornithologists, but compared to Ray most of them and myself were playing at it! An accomplished botanist and entomologist, towards the end of his RSPB career he helped establish Mersehead as a new reserve, and confirmed the presence of Harvest Mice both there and at Ken-Dee Marshes.

Although from a musical family and a lover of jazz - he played clarinet, very badly - Ray was more of an artist, especially bird paintings and illustrations, and many of his incredibly detailed and distinctively colourful works form treasured possessions on the walls of many.

He retired from RSPB in January 2000, but remained a valued volunteer on the Galloway Red Kite re-introduction project, submitting hundreds of wing tag sightings from the Galloway Kite Trail. In July 2013, he and Pauline moved to Glenrothes to be near their family. Always welcoming and engaging, Ray never lost his Yorkshire grit and pith, but he had a disarming and often amusing way of maintaining his position. Of many humorous incidents involving Ray, the one that most often comes to mind is the summer day he was visited by a senior colleague from RSPB's Scottish HQ. Ray was enjoying a cigarette, while his superior was retrieving wellingtons from deep within the car boot, whereupon a Honey-buzzard sailed overhead at a height of no more than 30 feet. Ray alone looked up to see and identify the bird, exhaled slowly and deeply, but said not a word.

He is survived by daughter Alison and granddaughter Josephine, but sadly his wife Pauline passed away on 20 June 2017.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jim Clark, Mike Everett and Alison Hawley for providing helpful information for this piece.

Chris Rollie

Mark Chapman (1959–2018)

Mark Chapman was a great birder, Shetland county recorder and latterly a brilliant professional ornithologist. He became a very valued, loyal and generous friend to those of us who knew him well. Mark was also about as quirky as they come, choosing to lead a rather solitary and private life, somewhat removed from mainstream society and focussed entirely on his passion for birds. He was one of a kind and very much his own man. He leaves a huge gap and will be greatly missed.

Mark established his reputation in the British birding scene during the late 1970s and early 1980s. After several exciting overseas trips, he settled in Shetland where he lived for the rest of his life. Mark dedicated his whole life to birding and was also a talented bird artist. Accompanying this obituary are two of his fine art works which hark back to an era of notebook descriptions and field sketches rather than photographs. The first is from his 1981 field notebook when he found a putative 'Red-tailed Shrike' on 15 October at Kergord, Shetland. The British Birds Rarities Committee didn't accept this as a 'Red-tailed Shrike' and considered it much more likely to be a Brown Shrike (then Britain's first). This record was never formally accepted, but he subsequently went on to find his second Brown Shrike in

Shetland (in almost identical plumage) and officially Britain's first on 30 September 1985 at Grutness. Mark went on to find dozens of 'BB rarities'. The second picture is also from his 1981 field notebook on 18 September on Fair Isle and is of a Pallas's Reed Bunting (the race known at the time as 'Polar Bunting'). Mark had a great autumn in 1981!

Mark's avian interests were more than just rarities and he was famed for his superb field craft and encyclopaedic Shetland ornithological knowledge. For the past 15 years he had been employed to undertake surveys and monitoring studies of Shetland birds, mainly in connection with windfarm developments. Through this work he developed a particular passion and expertise for three of Shetland's most valued breeding species: Merlin, Red-throated Diver and Whimbrel. Mark's fieldwork contributed greatly to the recent *Bird Study* paper we published on the breeding biology of Whimbrel on Mainland Shetland. We were working on a draft manuscript on the flight characteristics of Red-throated Divers in Shetland, much of it based on Mark's hard work, when we learned of his unexpected death from cancer in January 2018. It came as a great shock to us.

Plate 118. Mark Chapman, Shetland. © *Mark Chapman*

Plate 119. 'Red-tailed Shrike' *by Mark Chapman*

During his time working on sometimes controversial projects, Mark maintained his objectivity in that 'the powers that be' must be given good empirical evidence on which to make informed decisions. He was the consummate professional, not only in the level of skill and care he took in the field to collect first rate data but also in maintaining objectivity on a project where feelings, particularly in the local birding community, ran high. His care in the field also extended to a deep consideration of the birds themselves; he often chose not to make a nest visit or to leave an area early if he felt his presence could be deleterious.

Mark loved long conversations on almost any subject; especially birds of course, but also people and family (he was forever asking after our children) and the issues of the day. He also freely gave his time, knowledge and encouragement to a number of young birders and not-so-young potential birders, proving himself to be an able, enthusiastic and patient teacher.

On Peter's numerous trips to Shetland he always made time for a couple of days birding with Mark. Their last birding trip together was in October 2017 when they found a Thrush Nightingale at Sandgarth, Mark's favourite Shetland birding site. Beth and Tony Gerrard, the owners of Sandgarth, have provided a bench dedicated to Mark that looks over a scrub-covered slope that, despite their requests, Mark could never keep out of!

Peter Cosgrove and Digger Jackson

Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference, Dumfries, 17 March 2018

Plate 120. Entrance to the Barony College, Dumfries. *© David Palmar (www.photoscot.co.uk)*

This year's event was a commemorative one to mark the centenary of the birth of renowned Scottish ornithologist, wildlife artist and author, Donald Watson (1918–2005). Donald had strong connections with Dumfries & Galloway; he moved to the area with his wife in 1951 and was Galloway bird recorder for 30 years.

The SRUC's Barony campus in Parkgate, just north of Dumfries, provided an ideal meeting space, with the venue's vast sports hall comfortably accommodating the lectures and refreshments/exhibitor area. This self-contained format greatly helped to maximise networking and socialising time in the breaks and meant that the wide range of exhibitor stalls were well attended.

SOC President, James Main, opened the conference and welcomed a full lecture room of 200 attendees. Delegates came from all over Scotland - from the Outer Hebrides, Islay and Argyll to Edinburgh and Fife, and from Aberdeen and Inverness in the north to the Borders and Dumfries & Galloway in the south. Several delegates came from England and from as far south as Oxfordshire, with the furthest of all being the delegate who had flown over especially from Switzerland.

Delegates were treated to a varied and enjoyable programme with eight excellent speakers, all living and working in Dumfries & Galloway, talking with passion and enthusiasm, and sometimes humour, about the wonderful birdlife of the region. The presentations were supported by high quality audio visual equipment including a jumbo-sized projection screen, supplied by local AV hire company, SW Audio. The introduction slides put together by Lothian SOC branch committee member, Stephen Hunter, used to great effect digital reproductions of a selection of Donald Watson paintings, which had been kindly loaned for photographing for use at the event.

Donald's art was the subject of the first presentation of the day - and what a captivating and visually stunning start to the programme it proved to be.

Plate 121. James Main. *© David Palmar*

Plate 122. John Threlfall. © *David Palmar*

Donald Watson - An Artist's Appreciation

John Threlfall (Wildlife Artist)

The paintbrush of Donald Watson left many memoirs in colour, composition and image. It presented John Threlfall with a broad canvas and he covered it comprehensively in word an illustration.

John set the scene highlighting Donald's early wartime painting in the east, his move to Dumfries & Galloway which became his main painting ground, and with his becoming a founder member of the Society of Wildlife Artists.

He then directed attention to features of the paintings. The landscapes in Donald's bird paintings were of structured high quality in themselves. The landforms and colours immediately identified Dumfries & Galloway. Donald's painting outside at his easel was important in his achieving portrayal of a sense of place and atmospheric effect. The strength of colour in the paintings owed much to the gouache paint used. Influences on Donald's work came from Bruno Liljefors, Joseph Crawhall and Archibald Thorburn. Comparing a painting of Wigeon by the latter with a similar one of Donald's, John pointed out Donald's having more accurately depicted the bodily proportions of the birds and their height in the water.

Structure and balance of composition were noted as always presenting attractiveness to the eye. Goosanders were not just birds on a river; they were part of and embraced within the form and colours of their both natural-looking and artistically structured surroundings. A far-receding view accommodated aptly a Barn Owl flying low in the foreground. Background mountain haze gave position physically and atmospherically to a foreground Dotterel. Middle distance sloping rock balanced by background darkness boldly set off a foreground Dotterel. Donald's supreme bird soared. A buoyant male Hen Harrier was dramatic against a subtly coloured background. Three Hen Harriers apparently natural in position were, John explained, placed to give structure and depth. Five flying harriers similarly by their placings led the eye around the painting. Two harriers in a food pass were projected against dark and light background clouds. There was a reminder that Donald had also painted animals and butterflies. John's narrative illuminated the work of Donald's brush. That work will now be appreciated the more by those who heard this talk.

Sandy Mitchell

Pied Flycatchers in SWT Carstramon Wood Reserve

Brian Smith (Chair, SOC Dumfries Branch and North Solway Ringing Group)

Brian has been a member of BTO and SOC for over 30 years and has been part of a team including John Skilling that has monitored 130 nest boxes in the 70 hectare SWT Carstramon Wood Reserve since 2002.

The wood is a premier Bluebell site on a steep hill, which attracts Pied Flycatchers, Wood Warblers and Redstarts. The nest boxes were erected in the1990s mainly on Pedunculate or Sessile Oak trees.

Brian showed a short 'Springwatch' 2005 video of an adult male Pied Flycatcher defending his nest box from other males and described finding two dead males in other boxes that had been killed by Great Tits while defending their territory.

He described how the females made a beautiful nest lined with stripped Honeysuckle bark emphasising the need for the right woodland understory to be maintained. Pale blue eggs would be incubated for two weeks with the male and female birds both feeding the young in the first week after which just the female continued to do so. This explained why it was easier to catch and ring the female birds. Ingenious contraptions were invented by Mike Avery to seal the nest boxes, thus enabling the group temporarily to remove the adult and young birds for ringing and monitoring purposes. One enabled the ringer to get a hand into the box through a flexible lid and another to seal off the entrance hole.

Plate 123. Brian Smith. © *David Palmar*

Between 2004 and 2017, 289 females and 33 males were ringed together with 250 pulli. Findings revealed that apart from one bird, all re-traps returned to the same wood and were site faithful. Over a four-year period, one particular bird born in one nest box returned to either a neighbouring box or the same box each year and produced 22 pulli. Other neighbouring boxes held family members - daughter, mother and grandmother - all with their own young. The granddaughter produced 10 young, which was thought to be a world record.

Brian finished by listing and thanking all members of the team involved, too numerous to mention here.

Judy Greenwood

Changes in Bird Populations at RSPB Barclye

Crystal Maw (Site Manager, Galloway Reserves, RSPB Scotland)

Crystal made sure that her audience was fully involved by dividing us into groups, each representing a different habitat at Barclye. She then described vividly how they had all improved since the RSPB bought us!

Barclye Farm, on the east slope of the River Cree, north of Newton Stewart, was purchased to 'plug the gap' between the RSPB's Wood of Cree to the north and woodlands to the south. The original intention was to entirely infill with native broadleaves, but after an assessment, the RSPB decided that a varied mosaic of habitats would be of greater value. The 400-hectare farm quickly lost its silage fields but semi-improved grasslands, a Holly grove, some mixed woodland and wood pasture are being enhanced. Moorland holds a small reservoir and a Bronze Age burial site.

The woodland has been extended by planting 200,000 native broadleaved trees between ten and five years ago, fenced off to exclude Fallow Deer and the wood pasture is being grazed by fewer cattle. The river bank has been improved to boost the Sand Martin colony and the flood plain is being allowed to become wetter and scrubbier, with an increase, already, in Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers and Tree Pipits.

Plate 124. Crystal Maw. © *David Palmar*

Cottongrass and Bog Myrtle are spreading, amphibians are flourishing and ponds are benefiting the Variable Damselfly, which has its Scottish stronghold in Dumfries & Galloway.

On the high ground, blocked ditches are leading to more *Sphagnum* and the varied vegetation loved by Black Grouse - two males lekked last spring!

Visitors to Wood of Cree can follow woodland and scrubland trails out onto Barclye, and in 20–30 years, listen to Pied Flycatchers in the new woodlands, as well as in the mature forest.

Barbara Mearns

Plate 125. Mark Pollitt. © *David Palmar*

Bird Recording - A Birder's Legacy

Mark Pollitt (Manager, SW Scotland Environmental Information Centre)

Mark and I first coincided in 1994 on my volunteering for WeBS counts. He was the National Organiser for these being then located at WWT Slimbridge and, after being asked to fill the vacant local organiser's position for Central Region soon after, we were in regular contact up until the BTO took over the running of all waterbird surveys c.2004 and Mark moved up to Dumfries. Here, his regional role with the EIC covers Dumfries & Galloway plus Ayrshire where he oversees a database of over ¾ million local wildlife records which includes 300k bird records.

Mark began by acknowledging the resources provided by his workplace, which collates and shares information about local wildlife and habitats while supporting wildlife recorders across all taxonomic groups in the area covered by making use of the ever advancing capabilities of IT systems and modern communications.

Dumfries & Galloway has been very fortunate in having only two SOC bird recorders during the past 50 years: The celebrated Donald Watson for 30 years and then Paul Collin (the current recorder) who took over from Donald in 1991. With an ever increasing number of bird records

being sent in annually - 3k in 2002 compared to 47k in 2016 - Mark noted that the task of the recorder is becoming that of a data manager! He then made a plea for clear and unambiguous records seeing as the 1% which are not take up 99% of his time. He urged observers to add a grid reference (at least to the km) and be precise about the location name.

Mark then went on to talk about and illustrate (with a variety of enviable graphs and tetrad maps) some of the changes in species' distribution across the area - which covers 6,500 sq. km and a wide range of habitats - using data from 2007–2016. During this time, 296 species have been recorded with 210–240 annually (these include non-natives and escapees). Given the low and mostly sparsely populated region, it is to amateur naturalists' credit that 75% of tetrads have records with dense conifer plantations, with uplands unsurprisingly being the least visited!

Mark summed up by hoping that his talk and maps would encourage both locals and visitors to fill in some of the gaps. Meanwhile, in a break, Mark and I caught up on 14 years.

Neil Bielby

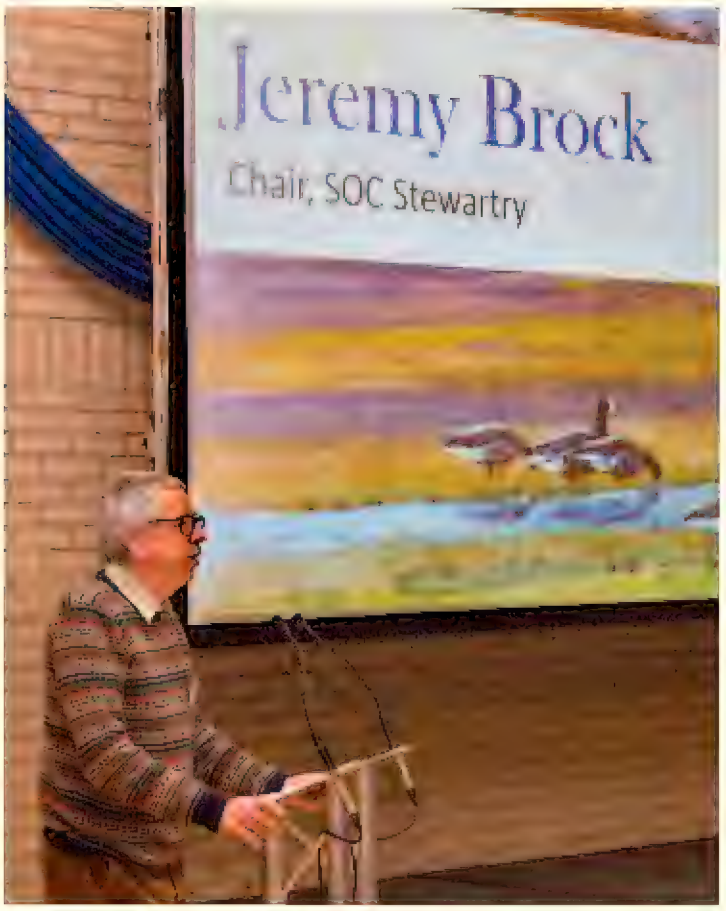


Plate 126. Jeremy Brock. © *David Palmar*

After the morning session, delegates had a short walk to the Barony's dining hall, where an excellent cold buffet awaited. The afternoon session was opened by Stewartry branch Chair, Jeremy Brock, who introduced the next speaker. Again attendees were in for a visual treat.

The Joy of Birds

Edmund Fellowes (Wildlife Photographer)

Edmund's presentation ensured that there was no post-lunch dip in our attention. We were simply transfixed by his opening slides of Blue Tits and his description of preparing a wire perch with potential nesting material so that he might capture that particular stunning image. And what detailed preparation: The ginger-coloured Highland cattle hair had been gathered in anticipation of composing such a captivating photo. Edmund's photography is award winning but his joy was clearly not only in seeing and photographing birds but also in getting to know the character and nature of his subjects intimately. In another set up, Tawny Owl feathers were sourced to provide the specific requirements of Long-tailed Tits, to attract them in. He wonderfully captured their antics and hilarious indignity as one individual wrestled with an out-of-control offering.

Like the first speaker, John Threlfall, Edmund used the Arts to heighten our awareness of the life of individual species. As he showed photographs illustrating the nature of the Song Thrush, he brought another dimension through the words of poet John Clare that clearly brought him joy. These lines made us look again and anew at the simple image of a Song Thrush nest and eggs:

Plate 127. Edmund Fellowes. © *David Palmar*

There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers, Ink-spotted over shells of greeny blue;

Edmund spoke not only with joy but with passion. He himself had been introduced to birds at a very young age and confessed that by primary school he was obsessed. He made a plea for the maintenance and expansion of opportunities for young children to encounter birds, particularly those birds that can be close up and personal at town ponds and lochs. His commentary and photographs of ducks and swans delighted the audience and reminded us of our own childhood experiences.

Throughout his presentation, Edmund made us think of our own joy of birds and we delighted in his marvellous photography, his insights and the additional dimension of great poets. How glad we were that his teacher was so wrong when she said to his parents that, with regard to his obsession with birds, he would 'grow out of it'.

Christine Dudgeon

Plate 128. Brian Morrell. © *David Palmar*

Little Egrets in Dumfries & Galloway

Brian Morrell (Centre Manager, WWT Caerlaverock Wetland Centre)

When asking Brian to speak and assigning him a topic. I did not realise that he would inform his audience of the 'dirty deed'. No easy talk on WWT Caerlaverock then! Brian embarked on a truly professional effort. We learned of his first sighting of a Little Egret in Brittany. He then credited Paul Collin, Dumfries & Galloway Recorder, with supplying the data on all the sightings along the Solway to the present time.

Not content with that, Brian gave us a history of the species in Europe, with particular reference to UK: Birds consumed in their thousands at the Coronation of Henry VI; millions of skins sold in markets less than 150 years ago for the plumes to be used for ladies' fashions; demonstrations in Manchester at the time of the birth of RSPB. No wonder the bird disappeared from the list of British breeding birds.

One day in 1968, a Little Egret appeared at Mochrum. It took 20 years before there were sightings at Caerlaverock. Such joy! Brian then showed us why this particular bird enjoys such a habitat with its small creeks running through the merse. We were treated to a discourse on the feeding habits of Little Egrets to catch small fish, amphibians and crustaceans.

An analysis of sightings now stretching from Gretna to Loch Ryan showed that the majority were between September to April. On any one day there might be more than 200 birds along The Solway - what a nice place to spend the winter! There has been no sign of a bird with a clue to where it was born; no Darvic rings to read and no carcass with a numbered ring. Although we know of breeding in Ireland, north-west England and the Netherlands, as yet we have no confirmed breeding in Scotland.

Brian thanked his photographers and invited questions: "Why have Little Egrets got black legs and yellow feet?" Brian is to be thanked for his supposition and élan until the Chair closed for coffee and shortbread.

Brian Smith

Reinforcing South of Scotland's Golden Eagles

Cat Barlow (Leader, South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project)

In Cat Barlow we had another person who maintained the high quality of the speakers evident at this day's conference. Her experience on raptors began in the company of top experts, Roy Dennis and Tim Mackrill, on the Osprey translocation project at Rutland Water in 2005.

Now living in Langholm and having been involved in the Langholm Moor project and other bird studies, she is in a prime position to lead the work to try and induce more eagles to come and live in prime eagle border country. This project has an initial funding for five years and has an impressive backing of fund holders, landowners, government departments and advisory groups who are all keen to know why so few eagles nest in the area.

The work of dedicated birders who dealt with the last nesting eagles in Cumbria was a starting point for this project. There are many place names relating to eagles in the area, but with only 2–4 ranges now occupied where 11–16 could be utilised. Surveys suggest that illegal persecution is the top reason for low numbers, with more forestry, wind farms and poor spring weather among other culprits. Food was not thought to be a problem, but there was little movement of birds from further north.

The project plan is to bring in 5–10 chicks per year from nests with two chicks. Strict codes for conservation translocation would be followed with release cages and early feeding arrangements in use until birds were thought able to hunt for themselves.

Community groups and Scottish Raptor Study Groups were all considered to be an important part of the project. With further volunteers to be recruited, it was hoped that the first translocations could be carried out this year.

Roger Gooch

A Quarter Century of Raptor Watching and Monitoring in Dumfries & Galloway

Chris Rollie (Area Manager, Dumfries & Galloway, RSPB Scotland, and Chair, Dumfries & Galloway Raptor Study Group)

Chris gave us one of his enthusiastic, full-throttle expositions. In his role with the Raptor Study Groups in Dumfries & Galloway, he has been fortunate to work with many experts of whom perhaps the most famous were Derek Ratcliffe and Donald Watson. Dumfries & Galloway has several designated areas, including the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Galloway and southern Ayrshire of over 5,000 km^2.

Peregrines nesting at inland locations have decreased since 1991 while those breeding on the coast have maintained a stable population.

Plate 129. Cat Barlow, South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project. © *David Palmar*

Plate 130. Chris Rollie of RSPB speaking about raptors. © *David Palmar*

The decrease is partly due to persistent persecution on and around some grouse moors, although racing pigeon and other prey has also become scarcer in Galloway. Golden Eagle numbers, although low, increased from 1940 to 1980 but then decreased; it's thought due to afforestation causing loss of foraging habitat. Food supply seems to be more limited in this region than in the eastern Southern Uplands where it is proposed to reinforce the eagle population.

Chris digressed briefly to note the usefulness of satellite tracking in locating the repeated 'disappearance' of eagles in parts of the Scottish Highlands. Goshawk has increased in the forested areas, while Honey Buzzard remains something of an unknown quantity. It is well known that the reintroduction of Red Kite to Dumfries & Galloway has been a great success; it also gives very good publicity. Hen Harrier was a favourite of Donald Watson, but its fortunes have fluctuated. From 1992 to 2017, the number of pairs fell from 20 to 10 but locally, as at Langholm where special measures have been taken, the number has risen sharply. Chris ended by saying that he was optimistic for the future because of increased awareness among the public of raptors as a key part of nature.

Graham Pyatt

After an excellent day of presentations, it was time for the raffle. Joan Howie, SOC Stewartry branch Secretary, had clearly pulled out all the stops, securing over 20 prizes kindly donated by local members, businesses and organisations. All tickets were sold, raising funds of £500 for the local organising SOC branches, Dumfries and Stewartry. Vanessa Hallhead, daughter-in-law of Donald Watson, was invited to make the draw and took the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Watson family, recalling her memories of Donald and thanking everyone involved in putting together this special commemorative event.

Plate 131. Vanessa Hallhead and Wendy Hicks. © *David Palmar*

Head of BTO Scotland, Chris Wernham, closed the conference, complimenting all the speakers for their excellent presentations, which provided a blend of science and insights into what dedicated personal studies can contribute, interspersed with wonderful art and photography. In her usual engaging style, Chris took the opportunity to mention that 2017 saw the most Breeding Bird Survey squares ever covered in Scotland and she thanked all the volunteers and organisers involved but also made a plea for people to have a look at the Upland Rovers BBS squares and take one up if they can - we still need even better coverage of the Scottish uplands to provide effective information for upland bird conservation. Finally, she gave advance thanks to the leaders of the following day's birdwatching trips.

Chris along with Ben Darvill and local SOC branch committee members were joined for an early evening meal in the Barony dining hall, which provided a convenient option for those with a long journey home in the Siberian weather that had started to take hold.

Ben along with local SOC members had also organised a series of excursions for the Sunday, taking in three popular spots in the area: RSPB Mersehead, WWT Caerlaverock and Castle Loch.

A group of around 20 intrepid birdwatchers braved the sub-zero temperatures and howling easterly winds, dodging through snow flurries into the warm RSPB visitor centre at Mersehead. Volunteer Jon kindly met the group and gave a briefing on all of the birds that should have been around if it were not for the ice covering all of the lagoons! As such, they set off, led by Ben, for the hides with low expectations. The first hide proved better than expected, with distant views of Barnacle Geese, Wigeon, Teal and a brief glimpse of a Little Egret in flight. By the time they reached the second hide, the sun was shining and many birds had congregated in an isolated patch of liquid water there, including Shoveler, Pintail, Gadwall and at least seven Little Egrets. A Treecreeper was seen in the woodland on the way to the shore, and a group of around 100 Skylarks roaming the fields contained a few interlopers, such as Linnet and Meadow Pipit. The walk ended with a welcome hot refreshment back at the visitor centre. A total of 45 species were recorded as a BirdTrack complete list by virtuous observers.

About 15 people met at Caerlaverock for the excursion led by Brian Morrell and Edmund Fellowes. Brian outlined the history of the WWT and the Caerlaverock reserve in particular then led the group along to the newly refurbished Sir Peter Scott observatory, where they enjoyed the view across the reserve from the tower and watched Whooper Swans, ducks and geese gather for the morning feed at 11 o'clock.

The group then split up, with Edmund leading some of the party to the Teal Pond hide, where a drake Garganey swam past, giving a close view. Later the group reconvened at the Salcot Merse Observatory, where a small flock of

Plate 132. Little Egret, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, March 2018. © *David Palmar*

Barnacle geese were feeding on the salt marsh (or merse). On the other side were the Hebridean sheep, which manage the grass length so that it is suitable for the Natterjack Toads, which last year spawned in six pools on the reserve. As well as the spectacular displays by the geese, there were more commonly occurring Scottish species such as Yellowhammer, Wren, Teal, Wigeon and Mallard, as well as a small number of Little Egrets.

Darren Flint led the outing to Castle Loch Local Nature Reserve, assisted by Chris Wernham and joined by half a dozen delegates. The group spotted a total of 42 bird species, including Meadow Pipit (25!) and the icing on the cake, Tree Sparrow and Willow Tit on the feeders outside Lochfield Cottage.

The feedback gathered from attendees was excellent, with many regarding the event as one of the best one-day conferences to date: The calibre of the speakers, talk subjects, venue, AV facilities, catering, timekeeping, excursions and the friendly atmosphere all came in for praise. Special thanks are due to the local Dumfries and Stewartry volunteers and in particular Drew Davidson, for their part in organising such a successful day.

NEWS AND NOTICES

New members

Ayrshire: Mr C. Calvey, **Borders:** Mr & Mrs J.C. Adamson, Mr & Mrs H. Bakkes, Dr C. Clegg & Ms C. Lyon, Mr A. Cutter, Mr & Mrs R. Turner, **Caithness:** Mr S. Kirkup, **Central Scotland:** Mr D. Anderson, Mr T. Paterston, Mr L. Reid, **Clyde:** Mr A. Begbie, Mr W. Gray, Mr A. MacCormick, Dr K. MacEachern, Mr R. Miller, **Dumfries:** Mr M. Moore & Ms J. Sammes, **England, Wales & NI:** Mr M. McCrea, Mr & Mrs M. Perry, Mr & Mrs M.W. Sullivan, Mr S. Westerberg, Mr R. Wildash, **Fife:** Mr M. Hill, Dr M. O'Neill, Mr A. Pay, Mr R. Walker, **Highland:** Miss M. Henley, Mr D. Hull, Mrs T. McLachlan, Mrs S.U. Sykes, **Lothian:** Dr K. Barton, Mr C. Bell, Ms E. Burrough, Dr P. Bysh, Ms R. Dunn & Mr J.M. Meny, Mr & Mrs D. Forrester, Mr B. Kerr, Ms S. Long, Mrs S. Lothian and family, Mr D. McKenzie, Mrs M.S. Miller, Mr A. Moore, Mr J. Newlands, Mr C. Norman, Ms M. Petraki, Ms A. Procter, Mr & Mrs I.R. Wheeler, Mr S. Wilson, Mr G. Woodbridge, **Moray:** Dr J. Thomason, **North-East Scotland:** Ms M. Nicolai, Mr K. Russell, Mr C. Veale, Mr P. Wilson, **Orkney:** Dr P. Shand, **Tayside:** Mr A. Cresswell, Mr K. Dinnie, Mr D.L. Miller.

SOC Annual Conference & AGM

26–28 October 2018, Macdonald Aviemore Resort, Aviemore. Programme and booking information included with this issue of *Scottish Birds* or visit *www.the-soc.org.uk*

Waterston House

A fitting send-off for Dave Allan

The response from Club members and Waterston House visitors to the news that Dave was retiring was staggering. During his last few weeks in post, well-wishers dropped by with cards and gifts and a generous cash collection was presented to a very overwhelmed Dave on the evening of the John Threlfall exhibition preview, which doubled up as a surprise leaving reception. Over 90 guests turned out for the event, which saw touching speeches from Club President, James Main, and artist, Darren Woodhead who himself unveiled a surprise gift for Dave in the form of a painting of the Lesser Yellowlegs at Aberlady Bay that Dave found in 2009. Staff and a few of Dave's regular volunteers said their own private farewell to Dave by way of an after-work drinks reception on 30 March, again kindly hosted by Doreen and James Main in their home.

Plate 133. Artists join Dave Allan at his retirement, Waterston House, 6 April 2018 (left to right: Pascale Rentsch, Darren Woodhead, Dave, John Threlfall, Chris Rose, Keith Brockie, Lucy Newton and Carol Barrett). © *Ian Andrews*

Dave Allan has passed on this message: *"I would like to thank everyone for all the kind, congratulatory cards, messages and gifts which I have received since my retirement was announced. I was very moved by the leaving presentation at John Threlfall's exhibition preview and would like to thank everyone who contributed to my extremely generous cheque, the SOC for the wood carving I received, and of course Darren Woodhead for his wonderful gift of a painting which meant much to me (I never thought I'd own an original). I would also like to thank John for so kindly sharing his occasion and the SOC for organising such a surprise send-off. Over the years I've made many friends through my work at the Club including the regular visitors to Waterston House and those who have attended the bird watching courses, many of whom I see out in the field which gives me great satisfaction. I found the artists who have exhibited a delight to work with and again many friendships have developed, and by no means least I have much appreciated the support and dedication of the volunteers who have helped me so much over the years. It's been a pleasure and quite a journey working for the SOC and I'd like to wish my successors Stuart, Laura and Scott all the very best for the future."*

Plate 134. Laura Gressani, Edinburgh, 2013. © *Linda Kosciewicz*

Laura Gressani - Art Exhibitions Co-ordinator
Originally from a business development background in the finance sector, Laura used a career break (to raise her young family) as an opportunity to change direction and pursue a long-standing interest in art. She was privileged to be invited to work with artist Kate Downie RSA in her studio for five years, thus developing her own practice as a printmaker. She is an artist member and trustee of Edinburgh Printmakers and brings several years' experience of organising exhibitions; first as Sales & Marketing Officer for Edinburgh Art Fair and then as Art Convenor at the Scottish Arts Club. Laura took up post in April and works part time, two and a half days a week (shift days vary).
exhibitions@the-soc.org.uk

Stuart Rivers - Birding Officer
Stuart started out his working life as a research biochemist but has spent the last eight years primarily as a freelance environmental surveyor. He is a well-kent face to many members, having been involved with the Club and other bird organisations for many years; he is on the *Scottish Birds* editorial team, has served on SOC Council and plays a key role in running the Young Birders Training Course. He is a former Chair of Fife Bird Club and is the editor of the Isle of May Bird Observatory annual report. In the past few months, Stuart has been organising a Scottish Bird Recorders meeting, expected to take place in the summer.

Plate 135. Stuart Rivers, Waterston House, April 2018. © *Eileen Henderson*

Stuart's main ornithological interests are migration and the occurrence patterns of rare and scarce birds in Scotland/Britain. He is a keen devotee of Scottish islands at migration periods - currently Isle of May in spring and Barra in autumn. Stuart took up the position of Birding Officer at Waterston House in April, working weekends and Mondays.
birdingofficer@the-soc.org.uk

Scott Paterson - Guided Walks Organiser
Scott is an accomplished ornithologist with extensive experience in surveying and monitoring a diverse range of species, having worked as a professional field surveyor for the past eight years. Previously he worked for RSPB for 13 years performing various roles at reserves up and down the country, including Site Manager for one of the society's flagship sites, Minsmere (Suffolk). Scott also has many years' experience delivering bespoke training courses on bird identification and surveying to consultancies and non-governmental organisations.
pkrecorder@the-soc.org.uk

Plate 136. Scott Paterson, Lomond Hills, April 2018. © *Miranda Shephard*

Plate 137. Black Grouse lek *by Michael Warren*

Art Exhibitions

John Cox and Colin Woolf -
showing until Wednesday 11 July
Michael Warren -
Saturday 14 July–Wednesday 29 August
Keith Brockie -
Saturday 1 September–Wednesday 3 October

Plate 138. Lapwing brooding chick *by Keith Brockie*

Optics Demo Day

Sunday 23 September, 10 am–4 pm, free event
A wide range of binoculars and telescopes to try out in field conditions. Or pop in for some free, friendly expert advice. If there are any models that you are particularly interested in looking at, please let us know and we will do our best to have these available for you to try at the event.

Up-to-date details of all forthcoming events at Waterston House are available at www.the-soc.org.uk

Branch updates

Moray branch: New secretary - Alison Ritchie, 45 Highfield, Forres IV36 1FN, tel 01309 674379, Email: moraysecretary@the-soc.org.uk

Central branch: Change of secretary email - Neil Bielby, Email: neil.bielby@gmail.com

Endowment Fund research grants - be sure to plan ahead!

In recent years, there has been a welcome increase in the number of applications for awards from the Endowment Fund, and the Club is to be congratulated for matching this with more funding available annually for disbursement.

The closing date for applications is 31 January after which the Research & Surveys Committee considers each application and decides the level of funding, if any, to be awarded. This is usually achieved by mid-February so that applicants can get their funding in place for the fieldwork season. The decisions are relayed to the Club Administrator at Waterston House, who organises the issue of payments from the 1st April.

Occasionally, the whole process is delayed by discussions of complex cases or of the level of funds for each project if the total claimed in a particular year exceeds the total available. In all cases, the R&S Committee tries to be fair and reasonable in its decision-making. However, problems have occurred in the past when worthy applications for funding have arrived shortly after the closing date, when discussions within the Committee have already commenced regarding applications received on time.

Given that there is a finite amount of money in the pot each year and in the interests of fairness to those submitting application forms timeously, from 2019, no late applications will be considered. As such, if you think you might require some funding for a research project, please plan ahead to avoid disappointment.

For more information on the scheme and hot to apply, visit: www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/grants or call Waterston House on 01875 871330.

Tom Dougall
Chair, Research & Surveys Committee

Review of *Birds of Scotland* Fund

At their meeting in March 2018, Council considered a review of the *Birds of Scotland* Fund which had been prepared by David Jardine, the chair of the group which manages the Fund. This review of the Fund, which is now 10 years old, was agreed when the Fund was set up by the SOC and the Editors of the *Birds of Scotland* to use the profits from the sale of the book.

The Fund was set up to '*support ornithological publications and special projects in Scotland; this may include extending current publications (e.g. increasing the number of editions of Scottish Birds per annum), and the provision of grants and/or loans to aid the publication of*

Table 1. The Research & Surveys Committee recommendations for the 2018/19 period.

Project title	Applicant
Study of breeding Honey-buzzard in Scotland.	Central Scotland Honey-buzzard Study Group
Quandale skua study, Rousay, Orkney.	Helen and David Aiton
Monitoring numbers and ecology of Sanderling on Sanday, Orkney.	Orkney Ringing Group
Filling the gaps in Long-tailed Duck knowledge, Orkney.	David Patterson
Geo-locators on Jack Snipe in Clyde area.	Clyde Ringing Group
Satellite tagging Kestrels in Ayrshire/D&G border.	Gordon Riddle

local/regional atlases and avifaunas and other works deemed appropriate by the trustees. Specific projects which promote the development of ornithology (particularly among the youth and wider public) in Scotland will be eligible for support. Effort should be made to ensure that at least 50% of the funds are spent on supporting publications'.

The review found that a total of 36 applications had been made to the Fund, which were evenly spread through the period of its operation. Sixteen awards (grants/loans/or a combination of these) had been made for publications (including a grant to the SOC to enable the full-colour publication of *Scottish Birds*, six regional avifaunas/atlases, and three local birdwatching guides). Awards had also been made for the digitisation of important historical bird records (including those from Fair Isle Bird Observatory and the Isle of May Bird Observatory), sponsorship of meetings and site interpretation. The value of awards varied between £453 and £15,000 depending on the project, although some loans have been repaid in full resulting in no medium-term draw-down. The Fund currently has available around 50% of its initial sum of £132,278.

It was agreed by the Editors of the *Birds of Scotland* and SOC Council that the Fund should continue to operate as currently for a renewed period of ten years, or until the point at which the working reserves had fallen below £5000. In this latter case the Fund would be closed and the remaining sum transferred into the SOC general fund. It was agreed that the purposes of the Fund should not be changed and that some minor changes would be made to the operation of the fund management group.

Further details of the fund are available at www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/publications/the-birds-of-scotland-fund. Further applications are welcome.

A Focus On Nature

With A Focus On Nature looking to expand its reach across the UK, an exciting new group has sprung up for young people in Scotland. The newly formed 'A Focus on Nature - Scotland' Facebook group aims to bring together young people (16–30) who share a passion for nature. With young naturalists networking with each other, the group looks to provide opportunities for their voices to be heard, for them to develop their skills and knowledge, and to enjoy the vast array of natural heritage that Scotland has on offer. Join 'A Focus on Nature - Scotland' on Facebook to connect with like-minded people, find out about opportunities, be a part of the youth conservation movement and to find out more!

Plate 139. Ptarmigan, Lochnagar, North-east Scotland, February 2018. © *Gus Routledge*

Dumfries & Galloway Bird Report 2016

Published in January, copies of the 2016 D&G report can be purchased from Peter Swan, 13, Robb Place, Castle Douglas, DG7 1LW, pandmswan@btinternet.com, 01556 502 144. Please make cheques payable to 'SOC Dumfries and Galloway Branches". The price (excluding p&p) is £8 to non-members and £6 to members. Please add £2 for postage. The report is also available for sale at Waterston House.

'The Teuchat Glen, Wildlife on a Highland Perthshire Estate'

Between 1 September and 3 October 2018, Keith Brockie will be launching a new book and exhibiting originals at Waterston House featuring the wildlife of a Highland Perthshire estate. The estate is a family-run shooting estate and sympathetic to the wildlife, with 110 species of birds recorded during his sketching there. By comparison, many of the more intensive 'industrial' shooting estates have much less species diversity.

The paintings are based on fieldwork over the past two years covering all the seasons. This estate has a large population of wading birds and Lapwings will be the most featured species with over 130 breeding pairs showing the breeding cycle through the spring and summer. With a good vole year in 2017, Short-eared and Barn Owls raised big broods including one of the former with ten chicks. Golden and White-tailed Eagles are much in evidence during the winter months feeding on the Mountain Hares. Keith was fortunate to witness a Golden Eagle catch a hare and two White-tailed Eagles landed and waited till the Goldie had its fill before finishing off the carcass. Other species including Black-throated Diver, Whooper Swan, Teal, Red and Black Grouse, Ring Ouzel, Stonechat and Whinchat as well as many others are illustrated. Not forgetting mammals both Brown and Mountain Hares feature well with healthy populations and also Roe and Red Deer.

Seeking a new member for SBRC committee

The Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) is seeking a new member to replace John Nadin, who retires later this year. To maintain geographical representation across Scotland SBRC would prefer a candidate from eastern areas of Scotland. Any potential candidates should send their name to the Secretary (Chris.McInerny@glasgow.ac.uk). If more than one name is put forward, a ballot will be instigated, with Local Recorders having one vote each.

Chris McInerny, on behalf of SBRC

Supporting birds in the community - Fife branch

We all know that feeding the birds through harsh weather can be an expensive undertaking! At a recent Fife Branch Committee Meeting, committee members decided to donate £200 from local funds to the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust for the benefit of bird support within the county.

The donation was to help keep the bird feeders topped up at the Trust's hides during the extreme weather conditions (a.k.a 'spring 2018') which if prolonged, can have a very detrimental effect on bird populations. The money will also support the Trust's management of their wetlands at the Eden Estuary Reserve - a popular and well-known bird watching location among branch and other Club members.

The donation was made possible thanks to the generosity of attendees who purchased raffle tickets at the branch's Christmas dinner and at the 2017 Spring Conference. Many thanks to everyone who bought tickets and donated prizes.

Fife Branch Committee

Plate 140. Blue Tit photographed from the Guardbridge hide, Fife, April 2018. © *Elizabeth Irwin*

Plate 141. SOC group birdwatching at Ardmore Point, Firth of Clyde, Clyde, 24 March 2018. © *David Palmar*

Clyde Branch at Ardmore – a joint outing with SWT Glasgow on 24 March 2018

D. PALMAR

After a morning coffee for some at Ardardan Garden Centre, which enabled a car-sharing arrangement to Ardmore, the sun was shining and a mild breeze came from the south-west as an amazingly large group of 32 people, about 20 from the SOC and 12 from SWT Glasgow gathered at the beach layby for the first of the recently reinstated SOC Clyde excursions, this one a joint venture with SWT Glasgow Members' Group. The Ardmore excursion was led by Sandy McNeil for SOC and Ann Brackenridge for SWT.

Memories of 15 inches of snow and a 'red warning' which had cancelled the Baron's Haugh excursion were soon forgotten as we made our way anti-clockwise around the peninsula. Starting at the North Bay, 33 Shelducks were seen feeding on the mud, and four Curlews flew over with two others in the bay. Jackdaws and Carrion Crows were in the field and a Wren called while a pair of Buzzards wheeled and mewed overhead.

Plate 142. Buzzard circling above Ardmore Point, Firth of Clyde, Clyde, 24 March 2018. © *David Palmar*

An irresponsible (or perhaps ignorant) dog owner walked his dog on the sand round the bay, despite a notice asking people to refrain from this practice in what is a Special Protection Area.

While walking round the bay, we heard Blue Tit, Great Tit and Magpie calling and a Greenfinch singing. In the bay were Herring Gulls, Common Gulls and a small group of Teal. At the north-western point of the peninsula, we stopped and most people managed to catch a glimpse through a telescope of some of the very distant 73 Great Crested Grebes and 25 Red-throated Divers which were counted by Sandy. Both the grebes and the divers spend the winter feeding on the sea before going back to their inland breeding lochs. A Gannet flew over as we rounded the peninsula, while a male Red-breasted Merganser and two Black Guillemots swam just offshore. Later, there were sightings of Eiders, Goldeneyes, Cormorants and six Shags on the sugar boat. A Slavonian Grebe was seen by Sandy but disappeared before anyone else could find it. On the way back, there was a heavy rain shower but a close view of three Wigeon in the South Bay. At the end nearly back at the cars, there were 11 Canada Geese in the field. A Woodpigeon, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Blackbird, Long-tailed Tit and Robin rounded off the day's sightings.

A total of 31 bird species were entered on BirdTrack as a complete list. Thanks go to Sandy McNeil for SOC and Ann Brackenridge for SWT for leading the excursion.

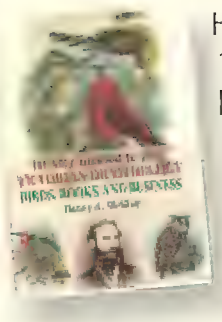
Look out for details of future Clyde branch outings in the Winter Outings Programme leaflet included alongside the September mailing of *Scottish Birds*. The branch hope to reschedule the cancelled outing to Baron's Haugh for autumn 2018.

David Palmar,
Clyde Branch Outings' Convenor

Plate 143. Ardmore Point, Firth of Clyde, Clyde, 24 March 2018. © *David Palmar*

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry Dresser and Victorian Ornithology: birds, book and business, Henry A. McGhie, 2017. Manchester University Press, ISBN 978-1-7849-9413-6, hardback, 341 pages, £25.00.



Henry Dresser (1838–1915) was one of the leading ornithologists in Britain during the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th. In this book, Henry McGhie has drawn on previously unpublished diaries, letters and photographs held in Manchester Museum and archives held elsewhere, and written a vivid and comprehensive biography of this key figure.

As a teenager, Dresser collected bird skins and eggs, an activity in later years facilitated through travel on business (timber and iron trade) to Fennoscandia and New Brunswick; he even collected around 400 skins in Texas during the turmoil of the American Civil War. One main thread of the book is the dominance of privately-held bird collections in British ornithology, with museum collections playing only a minor part. For example, of around 10,600 specimens examined by Dresser for his magnificent multi-volume *History of the Birds of Europe*, only 10% were from museums and just 4% were from the British Museum.

As access to private collections for research was often necessary, it is perhaps unsurprising that relationships with contemporaries were often fraught. One chapter (*The 1880s: the rise of rivalry*) describes a public fall-out between Dresser and Henry Seebohm which culminated, according to one commentator, in displays of 'astonishing rudeness' in the BOU's journal *Ibis*.

Each chapter concludes with a range of additional notes, and the reference section is comprehensive. This is an informative, entertaining and generously illustrated book, representing excellent value.

Bob McGowan

Winter Birds, Lars Jonsson, 2017. Bloomsbury, London, ISBN 978-1-4729-4281-4, hardback, 343 pages, £29.99.

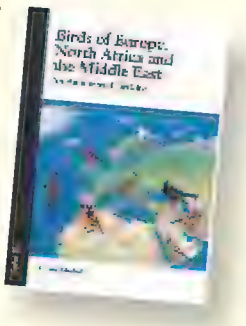
When I was a young birder, I was particularly captivated by the artwork of Lars Jonsson, who seemed to bring birds to life in his art. This was particularly true for the *Birds of Europe*, an amalgamation of his previous slim-line field guides based on different habitats.

His latest book, *Winter Birds*, focuses on 59 species and deals with each in some detail. Many are birds that he has observed regularly in winter on and around feeders at his studio on the island of Gotland, southern Sweden, most of which are also common at British bird tables. He also includes some of the more enigmatic species that occur mainly in the far north of Europe; birds that hold a special appeal to British birdwatchers because of their status as rare visitors to this country, or the fact that they have yet to make it here. Each species is accompanied by text on field characters as well as the author's personal observations. Maps showing the distribution of each species in Scandinavia and the UK are also provided, however these do not appear to be based on the more accurate data provided in the *Bird Atlas 2007–11*.

However, the illustrations in this book are truly inspirational, and certainly capture the vivid beauty of winter birds in all their glory. I certainly hope summer; spring and autumn birds will follow this delightful book.

Mike Thornton

Birds of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, an Annotated Checklist. Dominic Mitchell, 2017. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, ISBN 978-84-941892-9-6, Hardback, 335 pages, £29.99.



This new updated checklist of birds summarises key information for each species found within the regions it covers, including the updated regional boundaries of Arabia and Iran. As the author comments himself in the introduction, any checklist is a snapshot of the species in these regions at this present time but this is certainly one of the most concise lists that I have come across recently. It even includes regionally endemic and extinct species. The list is systematic and based on the IOC World Bird List's taxonomy with 1,148 species being described. Each species account is introduced with its Latin and common English name, with the additional feature of other names it might be known as locally, and also covers taxonomy and distribution. The book also includes a checklist for the keen tickers amongst us and national list totals for all regions covered in the book. A good addition to any birdwatcher's bookcase.

Hayley Anne Douglas

OBSERVATORIES' ROUNDUP

Observatories' Roundup is a regular bi-annual feature about our bird observatories in Scotland. The intention is to publicise the work of the observatories, visiting opportunities, as well as incidental snippets of news from the islands.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory

As I write this in mid-April, we await our first Observatory guests of the season at the end of the week, but it's been a busy start for avian visitors. April 2017 saw prolonged spells of north-westerly winds that blocked a lot of early migration, but 2018 has been the opposite with regular south-easterly winds seeing thousands of north-bound migrants calling into the Isle. High counts have included (with the last year there was a higher spring count); 82 Woodcocks (1988), 22 Ring Ouzels (2014), 1,115 Blackbirds (2006), 234 Fieldfares (2014), 461 Redwings (2006), 181 Song Thrushes (2006), 16 Mistle Thrushes (2013), 268 Robins (2012), 63 Dunnocks (2012) and 138 Bramblings (2014) making for some very impressive birding.

The spring has also seen the earliest ever arrival of Dotterel (on 5 April, beating the previous earliest record of 25 April 1973) and Lesser Whitethroat (13 April, seven days earlier than the previous earliest arrival), with both Grasshopper Warbler (12 April) and Tree Pipit (14 April) also making comparatively early annual debuts.

Hawfinches have had a very strong showing in the Northern Isles this spring (possibly related to the large arrival into southern England last autumn), and they've been a fairly constant presence on Fair Isle, with at least six individuals involved in sightings so far. The rarest species recorded during the spring so far has been 'Black-bellied Dipper' with one lingering for over a week and being joined by a second later in its stay. Typical - you wait seven years after dipping the last Dipper then two come along at once!

Plate 144. Dipper, Fair Isle, Shetland, April 2018. © *Richard Cope*

Plate 145. Hawfinch, Fair Isle, Shetland, April 2018. © *David Parnaby*

As would be expected, the traps and nets have been rather busy with several hundred birds ringed (including one of the Dippers which made its way into the Vaadal and four Hawfinches). One bird which evaded capture, but had its ring read in the field was a Finnish-ringed Siskin, our first foreign-ringed Siskin. We also received news from the BTO of one of Fair Isle's oldest-ever ringed birds, with a Fulmar found dead on the beach at Schiermonnikoog in The Netherlands in December having been ringed as a chick on Fair Isle in August 1977. The Twitter replies to the question 'what were you doing when this bird was ringed' made for some interesting reading!

There's a mix of the old and new in the Obs team for 2018, with Orlando, Michael and Inessa returning to the kitchen and being joined by David Roberts. Richard Cope has returned for his fourth year as Assistant Warden and we welcome David Roche and Vivienne Hastie as new arrivals to the post of Assistant Warden and Ranger respectively. The Ranger role is part-funded by SNH and offers a variety of walks, talks and activities relating to Fair Isle, which always proves very popular with our visitors.

Plate 146. Finnish-ringed Siskin, Fair Isle, Shetland, April 2018. © *David Parnaby*

It looks like it's going to be another very busy year for guests at the Obs, with Shetland's current popularity with tourists showing no sign of slowing down (thanks at least in part to BBC's *Shetland* series). There are still a few vacancies in August, early September and late October and bookings are also open for 2019 and selling fast again, so get in touch soon if you're planning a visit to Fair Isle.

David Parnaby, FIBO Warden
Email: fibo@btconnect.com

Isle of May Bird Observatory

The coverage on the Isle of May during January–March is intermittent due to the lack of any residents on the island at that time of year, with only brief visits by island staff during this period. The Bird Observatory was manned after a delayed start (due to weather) with the work party moving out on 21 March and recording becoming more regular thereafter.

The late winter period produced a typical light scattering of over-wintering birds with up to seven Short-eared Owls which eventually dwindled to one by 30 March. Small numbers of thrushes, Wrens and Robins over-wintered and early spring highlights including a Lapwing on 8–9 January (only two records the previous year) whilst the first Woodcock of the year was discovered on 10 January. Single Snow Buntings were recorded on 22 February and 28 March whilst a Red-necked Grebe on 10 January increased to two the following day with a single still on 12 March.

Plate 147. Palpitation Brae full of snow following the 'beast from the east', March 2018. © *David Steel*

Plate 148. Low Light (bird Observatory) with snow from the 'beast from the east', March 2018. © *David Steel*

Plate 149. Main Light standing up to the 'beast from the east', March 2018. © *David Steel*

The 'beast from the east' brought heavy snowfall (which is rarely seen on the island) in late February and early March, bringing with it a noticeable influx of Black Guillemots during this period. Small numbers sheltered together in the lea of the island off the West Cliffs with numbers peaking at six on 3 March. Early spring wildfowl passage produced herds of Whooper Swans on northerly passage including 24 on 26th, 10 on 28 March and 2 on 1 April. Other highlights included nine Long-tailed Ducks south with a single drake Velvet Scoter and two Goosanders. However, star billing went to a drake Shoveler seen with Eiders off the west side of the island, the first live record since July 2010.

An easterly weather front in late March produced a good fall of Robins, Dunnocks and other birds associated with early spring. Woodcock numbers peaked at 6 on 30–31 March whilst a Water Rail in the Low Trap on 28th was the first spring record since 2008. Migrants included huge influxes of Robins with 100 on 30th, 150 on 31st and over 200 on 1–3 April, with Dunnock numbers peaking at 40 on 1 April. During this spell, northern bound thrushes were very evident with a female Ring Ouzel from 30 March–4 April and up to four Mistle Thrushes. Other summer migrants trickling through included the first Wheatear on 30 March with a peak of four the following day, Chiffchaffs from 22nd with a peak of 12 on 30 March and up to four Black Redstarts from 30 March–4 April including two stunning adult males. Other highlights included a Greenfinch on 28 March (an increasingly scarce visitor) and a flurry of Brambling with a peak of seven on 30 March including a resplendent adult male. To cap a good start to the season, a cracking male Hawfinch was discovered feeding on the ground near the Chapel on 31 March, representing only the ninth record for the island.

Seabirds

It was a tough start to the season for our breeding seabirds, with the winter storms halting any consideration of an early start. Shags were well settled at nest ledges in mid-February but the storms which followed displaced many birds and very little activity was noted by early April (first eggs were discovered on 22 March last year). Puffins were ashore for a few days from 25 March but moved back to the open sea whilst Guillemots and Razorbills were present sporadically.

David Steel, Isle of May Reserve Manager,
Scottish Natural Heritage
Email: David.Steel@snh.gov.uk

Plate 150. Male 'Northern Bullfinch', Ferryhills, Fife, November 2017. © *Kim Blasco*

A 'Northern Bullfinch' flock in Fife, October–November 2017

G. SPARSHOTT & K. BLASCO

Introduction

GS has been making regular migration studies at Ferryhills, North Queensferry, Fife since 2015. The site's strategic position on high ground at a narrowing of the Firth of Forth has made it an excellent place to study visible migration with an impressive variety of species recorded from passerines to seabirds making overland migration. Grounded migrants are generally harder to come by, so the discovery of a group of 'Northern Bullfinches' *P.p. pyrrhula* was a major highlight of autumn 2017. These birds subsequently stayed until at least 19 November (regular observations have ceased since mid-November). This prolonged stay afforded a rare opportunity to study birds of the northern race over a long period.

This article presents our observations on the Ferryhills birds in terms of plumage characters, vocalisations and general behaviour.

Circumstances

Suitable weather conditions had facilitated a large arrival of Scandinavian migrants at the start of the second half of October. The first evidence at Ferryhills was an impressive movement of Redwing, with just over 7,000 noted moving through from 07:15–09:30 on the 19th. The following day (20th) saw murkier conditions and although numbers of Redwing were lower than the previous day these were still prominent overhead while modest numbers were grounded. Also on this date, uncommon species for the site inlcuded a single Ring Ouzel and Twite.

GS left his vantage point to make a quick circuit of the area before heading off to work. While making a check of a sheltered gully, he noticed movement in a Whitebeam tree, and on raising his binoculars he was faced with a group of very large and very pale Bullfinches which he felt had to be of the northern subspecies *pyrrhula*.

Initially, seven birds were present, five males and two females. The birds were very approachable (more so than British *pileata*) as they actively fed on the Whitebeam berries; this tree would be favoured by the birds for several days to come. As the group depleted the berry crop on their original Whitebeam tree they became more mobile and elusive but remained in the general area and GS was surprised to find that the group had increased by one with a third female noted from 29 October. Although not always together (or not all visible at the same time), all eight birds remained until cessation of regular visits on 19 November 2017.

Discussion of Identification

GS's field experience of *pyrrhula* was limited to a probable male feeding on rosehips outside his house in Dunfermline in the snow during the hard winter of 2010/11, but he had done his homework with the essential reference of Garner (2015). He had also been scrutinising British *pileata* on a regular basis. Ferryhills provides ideal habitat for Bullfinches, with dense areas of hawthorn and bramble scrub. A build-up in Bullfinch numbers had been noted in previous autumns here, e.g. 11 birds on 22 October 2016.

The initial take-away points for GS were, in addition to the obvious bulk, how surprisingly distinctive the plumage of the females in the group could look in comparison to female *pileata*. It was also noted that photographs didn't always capture the underpart tones of the males correctly and you really had to look at them in the field. In addition, there was some genuine variation in the paleness of the underparts between the males in the group.

Size and shape

Although groups of *pileata* were in the general area, there were no observations of them joining the group of *pyrrhula* and aside from a brief appearance by a male and female *pileata* in the same field of view (in the Whitebeam tree initially favoured by the group), there were limited opportunities to make side-by-side comparisons. Despite this, the larger size and different shape of the *pyrrhula* always came across following prolonged observation. Their shape varied to some degree depending on posture, but generally the birds showed a much fuller, barrel-chested appearance in comparison to *pileata*, often with a neckless appearance and a flatter-topped crown (Plate 152). The primaries appeared longer than *pileata*, equalling the length of the exposed tertials (Plate 151). The bills on the *pyrrhula* were larger and deeper with a more obviously concave culmen.

Plumage

Plumage was very similar to *pileata* but with the following key features used to identify these birds as of the northern subspecies:

Males

The mantle colouration on the male birds was considered a paler silvery grey in comparison to the darker smoky grey of *pileata*. One individual was noted to have pink tones admixed with the grey upperparts (Plate 150) something that tends to be more prevalent in *pyrrhula*, increasingly so in the east of the range (Garner 2015). The greater covert bar was broader than in *pileata*, however there was variation in the colour of the wing bar with some individuals showing whiter wing bars than *pileata* while others were grey (Plate 151). Garner states that variation in wing bar colour is acceptable for *pyrrhula*. At least two of the males showed a 'saw tooth' pattern on the upper edge of the greater covert bar (Plate 150). This serrated pattern is considered much more prevalent in *pyrrhula* than in *pileata* males; however, this feature is not a reliable indicator in females.

The underparts tone was different to *pileata*. There was variation between individuals in the group from one male with particularly pale pink tones (Plate 150) to those with deeper 'raspberry' tones. Nevertheless, all differed in lacking the warmer orange tones of *pileata* when observed in the field. As already mentioned, some images didn't always convey a strong difference from *pileata* (see Plate 152), emphasising the importance of assessing subtle differences in colouration in the field.

Plate 151. Male 'Northern Bullfinches', Ferryhills, Fife, October 2017. © *John Nadin*

Plate 152. Male 'Northern Bullfinches', Ferryhills, Fife, October 2017. © *Graham Sparshott*

Plate 153. Female 'Northern Bullfinch', Ferryhills, Fife, October 2017. © *Graham Sparshott*

Females

Like the males, sheer bulk, long wings and heavy bills were useful differences from *pileata*, but the plumage tones were also surprisingly distinct. In comparison to female *pileata* there was a uniformly pale appearance to both upper and underparts which was down to the female *pyrrhula* lacking the darker warm brown mantle colouration found in female *pileata*. The underparts of the female *pyrrhula* were noted to be paler than *pileata.* A pale lilac hue to the plumage, described as almost Waxwing-like by Garner (2015), was noted under some lighting conditions (Plate 154).

Calls

The calls of 'Northern Bullfinch' have long attracted discussion since the well documented invasion across Western Europe in 2004 involving birds giving a trumpeting call which was unfamiliar to many observers, even those living within the range of *pyrrhula*. That year saw an estimated 4,000 birds arrive in Britain (Pennington & Meek 2006). Discussions on the origins of these calls turned towards a far eastern origin for an explanation although it was subsequently established that birds with such calls had been heard in Northern and Western Europe before. Further confirmation of birds sound-recorded with trumpeting calls in Europe came from The Sound Approach (Constantine *et al*. 2006) who suggest that this call is diagnostic for 'Northern Bullfinch' while also acknowledging that not every 'Northern Bullfinch' uses this call. Garner states that the whistle call of *pyrrhula* sounds "almost indistinguishable" from *pileata* but is in fact 0.5–1 kHz lower pitched.

The Ferryhills birds were not conclusively heard to give any trumpeting calls, but regularly gave whistle calls which initially to GS's ear sounded lower in pitch than *pileata*. These calls were recorded on two separate occasions by KB, in windy conditions on 10 November and in calmer weather on 19 November. Sonograms of the recordings made using 'Raven Lite' software showed the pitch of all the whistle calls recorded to be 3 kHz. Both the shape of the sonogram and the pitch were consistent with the sonograms shown in Garner (2015) and Constantine *et al*. (2006) for *pileata* and showed no evidence of being lower pitched, i.e. in the 2.0–2.5 kHz region. However, neither of the publications referred to above contain sonograms for the whistle call of *pyrrhula*. The xeno-canto.org website does contain some sonograms of whistle calls from birds described as *pyrrhula* where the pitch is about 2.5 kHz (e.g. XC359043 from Norway, XC359043 from the Russian Federation). In short, therefore, the calls recorded for the Ferryhills birds do not provide positive support for their identification as *pyrrhula*. However, relatively little information about the whistle calls of *pyrrhula* has been published, and the available literature tends to focus mainly on their trumpeting calls. This may

Plate 154. Female 'Northern Bullfinch', Ferryhills, Fife, October 2017. © *Graham Sparshott*

Plate 155. Female 'Northern Bullfinches', Ferryhills, Fife, November 2017. © *Graham Sparshott*

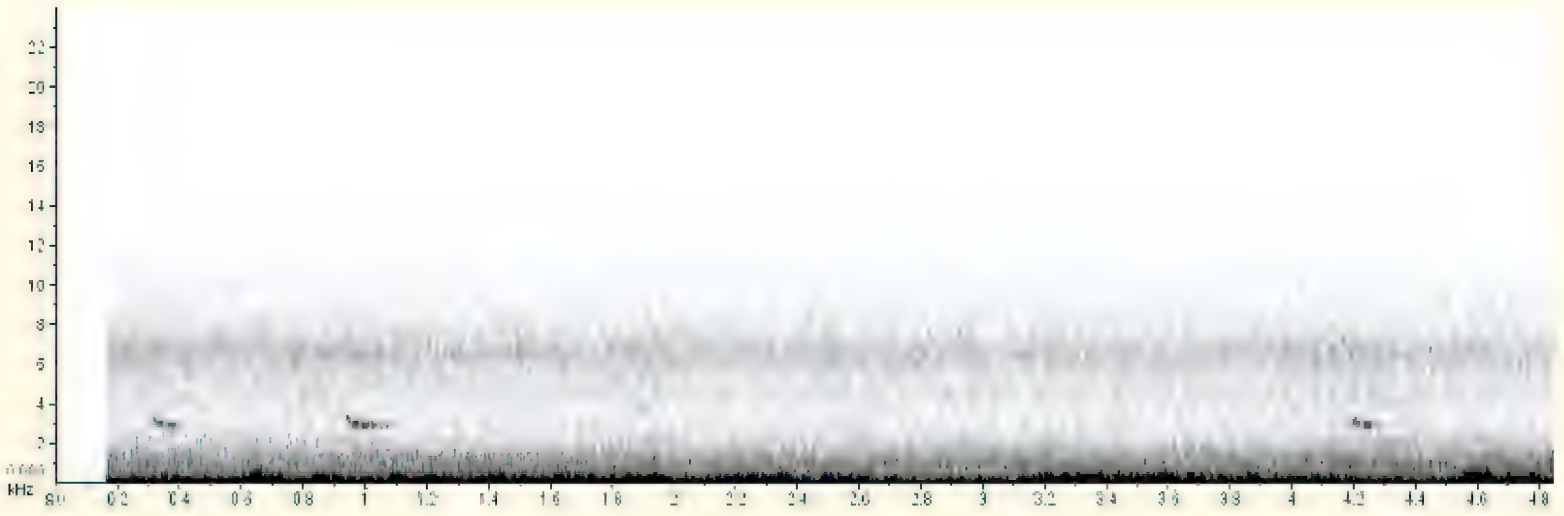


Figure 1. Sonogram of 'Northern Bullfinch' whistle call recorded at Ferryhills, Fife on 19 November 2017. © *Kim Blasco*

be an area where more research is required. We put forward the following suggestions that could explain the apparent whistle call anomaly:

1) There is a cline for 'Northern Bullfinch', with larger birds from further east having deeper calls and smaller birds from closer to us having higher pitched calls or;

2) The calls recorded were given by the less striking candidates in the party, i.e. not the one or two really large pale males. (There was some variation in appearance in the males in the group, although all were considered to be distinctive enough not to be *pileata*).

If variation in the whistle calls is not clinal and the calls of *pyrrhula* are always lower-pitched, another possible explanation for the anomalous calls of the Ferryhills birds might be that the party comprised a mixture of *pyrrhula* and the Central European race *europoea*. On balance, however, we do not feel that the calls of the Ferryhills birds are in themselves sufficient to outweigh the strong morphological and behavioural evidence supporting their identification as *pyrrhula*.

Behaviour

Garner (2015) makes mention of differing behaviour and foraging resources for *pyrrhula* in comparison to *pileata*: "Vagrant Northerns are known for not joining flocks of British birds, for being tame, for feeding near to the ground and for preferring larger berries e.g. Rowan".

The Ferryhills birds were noted to be approachable and would often feed in prominent positions on the outer branches of the Whitebeam tree they initially favoured. Subsequently the birds became more elusive, probably a consequence of them depleting a favoured food source on the original tree and then becoming more mobile in search of other suitable berries (there were numerous other Whitebeam in the wider area). Whitebeam produces larger berries, similar in appearance to Rowan.

Towards the end of their stay, on the weekend of 18–19 November, the birds were noted to be feeding near to ground level on the berries of a cotoneaster species. It was noticeable by this point that berries on Whitebeam in the area had largely gone, eaten not only by the 'Northern Bullfinches' but migrant thrushes. Once again, the birds would often perch prominently in the open, with at one point three females observed together on some very thin, isolated branches (Plate 155). During this same period of observation, a male bird was noted feeding on the ground amongst leaf litter and was assumed to be searching for fallen berries.

Behavioural traits and foraging preferences can only ever be indicative, since a large range of variables - e.g. weather conditions or site-specific limitations on types of foraging resource available - may influence the habits of either race of Bullfinch. Nonetheless, our observations of the group of *pyrrhula* in this respect certainly accord well with Garner's description. GS had what could be described as a rather typical encounter with a male and female *pileata* in a different part of Ferryhills which was in contrast to the *pyrrhula*, with the birds proving rather shy

and elusive as they fed on smaller berries in Hawthorn scrub.

Other records in 2017

An online search revealed very few reports of 'Northern Bullfinch' in Britain during the autumn of 2017, but one record did hint that perhaps a small arrival on the east coast of Scotland had largely gone undetected; John Nadin recorded two superb males at St Abb's Head, Borders, on 19 October. Interestingly, this was just prior to the discovery of the Ferryhills birds. An image of one of the St Abb's Head birds is included (Plate 156).

Conclusions

A party of up to eight Bullfinches showing characteristics of the northern subspecies *pyrrhula* were present at Ferryhills, Fife from 20 October until 19 November 2017. Their prolonged stay allowed close study of morphological features and behavioural traits that we feel are strongly indicative of this subspecies. Recordings made of the birds' whistle calls did not match the lower frequency expected for *pyrrhula* as indicated in some literature (e.g. Garner 2015) and were in fact identical to British *pileata*. However, relatively little information has been published as regards the whistle call of *pyrrhula*, with the trumpeting calls of this subspecies being the main focus of previous studies. We suggest that this may be an area where more research is required and that the morphological and behavioural features of the Ferryhills birds strongly outweighed the apparent whistle call anomaly.

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Plate 156. Male 'Northern Bullfinch', St Abb's Head, Borders, October 2017. © *John Nadin*

Plate 157. Green Warbler, Fair Isle, Shetland, July 2017. © *David Parnaby*

Green Warbler, Fair Isle, Shetland, 4–7 July 2017 – first for Fair Isle

D. PARNABY

Opening the mist nets in the Observatory garden in early July does not usually result in much more than a few juveniles of locally breeding species and perhaps the odd retrap of a summering Chiffchaff or Robin. Still, you never know, so it's always worth it when the opportunities present themselves...

So, it was that the first calm day for a while saw the nets open and a House Sparrow and a couple of Twite caught. Just before 21:00 hrs, a net round saw a *Phylloscopus* warbler pop up then jump into the net.

On extracting it, the large supercilium made it an obvious Greenish-type, but the yellowy wash on the face and underparts, the strong greater covert bar and the faint pale tips to some of the median coverts immediately raised questions as to whether it could be a Green Warbler.

The Obs team and guests gathered to look at the bird, which was quickly processed and released. The options were discussed, but there was a lack of experience of Green Warbler amongst us, so we began looking in more detail at field guides and internet articles. The species is not always an easy one to identify, with a combination of characters rather than a single 'smoking gun' feature required for identification. Although our gut reaction was Green Warbler, descriptions of the Unst bird of 2015 mentioned 'Wood Warbler-like' colours, which was something our bird clearly didn't possess. The bird was also missing the feathers from immediately above the bill, which meant it was impossible to judge where the supercilium ended (it usually meets above the bill on Greenish, but stops at the base of the bill on Green).

There were some features that appeared to favour Green Warbler; a long-looking bill (although this may have been enhanced by the missing feathers at the base of the bill), the squarish and quite broad greater covert bar, slightly longer primary projection than Greenish and paler legs, although none of these were conclusive. Similarly, the biometrics (including bill measurements and wing length), were in the overlap zone suggesting either a large Greenish or small Green Warbler. With the presence of a brood patch showing the bird to be a female (a fact later confirmed by DNA analysis), the duller colours and measurements could both perhaps have favoured Green Warbler, whilst the late spring date may also have had an influence on the plumage tones.

With seabird monitoring work taking up a lot of our time, and the bird being generally elusive in the Obs garden, field views were limited until the last day of its stay. On brief views, the yellow underparts were not obvious and it would have been easy to pass the bird off as a Greenish Warbler, although better views showed a consistent yellow wash to the face, upper breast and undertail coverts.

The gut feeling of the wardening team was that the bird was a Green Warbler and several observers who were familiar with the species got in touch to say they thought that Green Warbler was probably the most likely option. It was not really a surprise then, when the DNA analysis undertaken by Professor Martin Collinson confirmed the identification and added another species to the Fair Isle list.

Plate 157. Green Warbler, Fair Isle, Shetland, July 2017. © *Ciaran Hatsell*

David Parnaby, Fair Isle Bird Observatory
Email: fibo@btconnect.com

Status of Green Warbler in Scotland

*This taxon (*Phylloscopus nitidus*) was previously considered to be a subspecies of Greenish Warbler, but was formally elevated to species status by the BOU in 2009 (Collinson* et al.*, 2003; Knox* et al.*, 2008; BOU, 2009), as later was Two-barred Greenish Warbler (*P. plumbeitarsus*), with Greenish Warbler now considered as comprising (*P. trochiloides *with subspecies* trochiloides, ludlowi, obscuratus *and* viridanus*).*

Green Warbler breeds from northern Turkey through the Caucasus to Uzbekistan. The entire population is migratory and winters in the southern part of the Indian peninsula.

There are three previous accepted records of Green Warbler in Britain:

1983: *Isles of Scilly, first-winter, The Garrison, St. Mary's, 26 September to 4 October.*

2014: *Shetland, adult, Ristie, Foula, 31 May to 4 June*

2016: *Shetland, adult, Baltasound, Unst, 12–15 May (DNA analysed)*

The dates of the Fair Isle bird's occurrence widen the dates within which this species has been seen in Britain, but suggest that this species should be borne in mind with any winged-barred phylloscopus warbler of the "greenish-group" discovered during spring or autumn migration and the period between.

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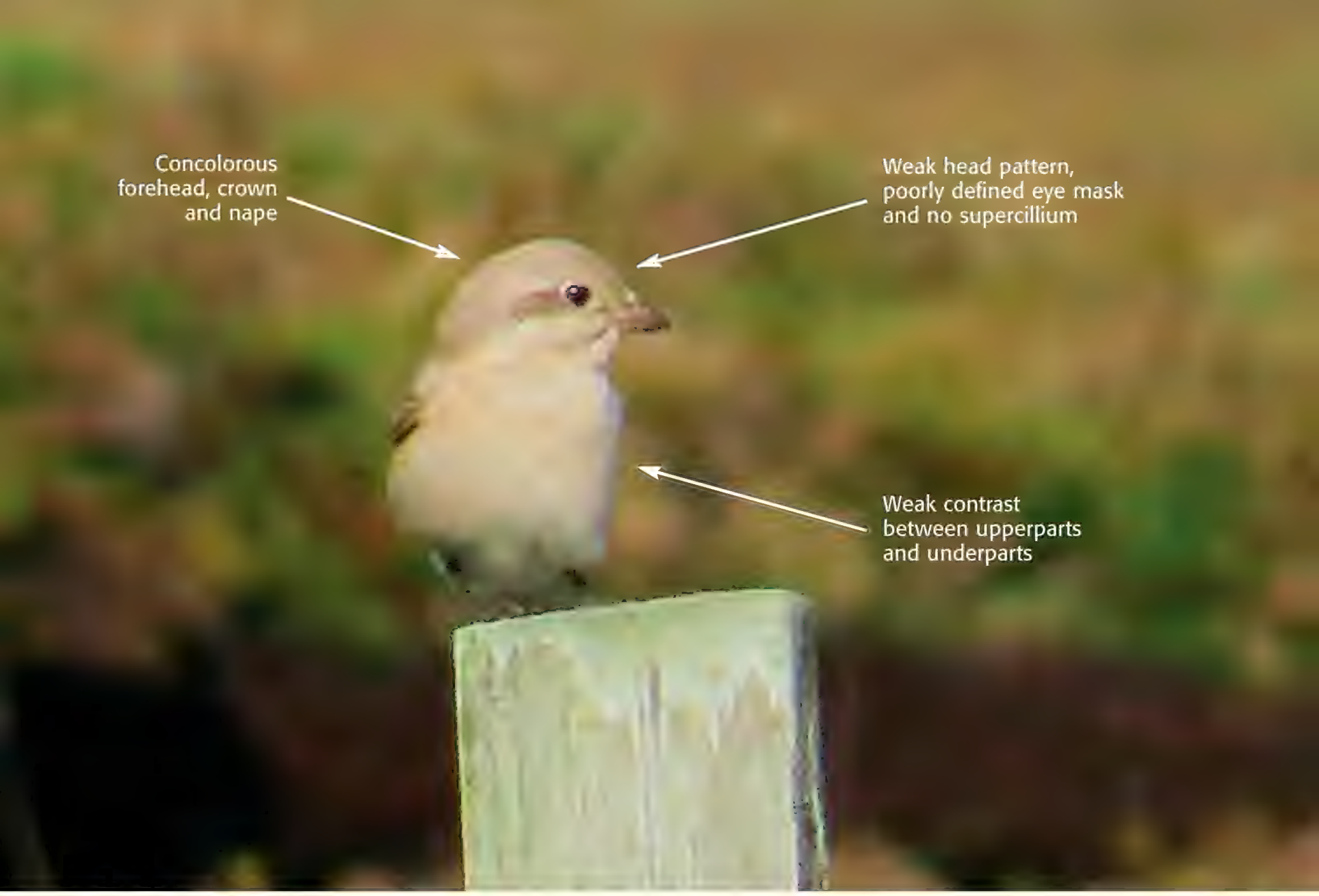
Concolorous forehead, crown and nape
Weak head pattern, poorly defined eye mask and no supercillium
Weak contrast between upperparts and underparts

Plate 158. 1cy Daurian Shrike, Foula, Shetland, September 2017. © *Kris Gibb*

A multiple ocurrence of 'Isabelline' Shrikes on Foula, Shetland – plus notes on the separation of Daurian and Turkestan Shrikes in 1st calendar -year plumage

M. WILKINSON, K. GIBB & A. STIRRAT

After an aborted flight the previous afternoon, with our small aircraft turning back halfway across to the island, we were relieved to finally arrive on Foula mid-morning on 30 September 2017. The rain and SE winds that had caused our flight to be delayed the previous day had obviously brought a good arrival of migrants to the island. Geoff and Donna Atherton, the two resident birders on Foula, had already made a promising start, finding an 'Isabelline' Shrike and a Rustic Bunting at the Braidfit croft at the south end of the island on 29 September. Understandably, we were very keen to drop our bags at our self-catering accommodation and start working our normal route down the island, from north to south, to see what else could have been grounded by the bad weather.

On reaching Burns Cottage (still in the northern half of the island) we were quite surprised to flush a pale, rufous-tailed shrike out of the front garden, which we naturally presumed was the 'Isabelline' Shrike of the previous day. We spent about 45 minutes watching the bird and obtaining photographs, slightly confused and wondering to ourselves why the bird had moved so far from the previous day? For those not familiar with the geography of Foula, Burns Cottage lies about 2 km north of Braidfit, and is separated by mostly barren, heather covered moorland.

Putting this question aside for the moment, we then continued working our way down the island, reaching the Braidfit Croft by early afternoon. We had a look for the Rustic Bunting found the previous day, but only turned up a Little Bunting, plus several Reed Buntings in a brief search. Just on the point of leaving, we saw a pale, rufous-tailed shrike disappearing rapidly around the front of the croft and diving into the front garden. With a careful approach we were soon watching and photographing the bird. Slightly baffled (how had it passed us on the way down the island, why had it moved 2 km north, only to almost immediately return south?) we passed it off as one of those strange things that can happen in birding, especially on Foula.

However, when comparing the photos that evening, several features showed the two birds to be clearly different. Although we could only look at small 'back of the camera' shots, the differences between the two shrikes was really quite striking. The two bird theory was confirmed in spectacular fashion the following day, when we took Geoff and Donna to see 'our shrike' at Burns, only to be confronted with not one, but two 'Isabelline' Shrikes sitting a few metres apart on the same fence-line! The two birds did not really associate with one another, although there was a brief period of aerial chasing when they came into close contact, probably a unique experience in Britain.

The original Burns bird remained until 3 October, defending its feeding territory around Burns Cottage, and forcing the Braidfit bird to move to the nearby croft of Loch. After the Burns bird departure, the Braidfit bird relocated to Burns Cottage, as this seemed to be the preferred location for the shrikes, probably due to the shelter afforded by several large Sycamore trees. It was trapped and ringed at Burns on 6 October, and remained until 11 October. During their stay, both shrikes were seen to be feeding mostly on large flying insects, including bumble bees and hoverflies. This was in stark contrast to an 'Isabelline' Shrike we had previously watched at Ham, Foula on 10–12 October 2013, which fed almost exclusively on passerine migrants, killing several Blackcaps and Meadow Pipits, and even on one occasion a Wheatear!

Taxonomy, splitting and Scottish records

Although the first Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* for Britain occurred as long ago as 1950 (on 26 September, on the Isle of May, Fife), the progress of 'Red-tailed Shrikes' in Britain has been far from smooth. For many years, they were regarded as either races of Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio* or as races of one super-species *L. cristatus*, itself incorporating some 11 races. In 1980, the BOU recognised three separate species; Red-backed, Isabelline and Brown Shrikes *L. cristatus*. Following Pearson 2000, Isabelline Shrike was further split into Daurian Shrike *L. isabellinus* and Turkestan Shrike *L. phoenicuroides*, although this split was not universally accepted, including by the BOU, who continued to treat the two populations as races of Isabelline Shrike.

More recently, it was announced that from 1 January 2018, the BOU would follow the taxonomic sequence, status and nomenclature of the International Ornithological Congress (IOC). Based on this, in a British context, Isabelline Shrike is now recognized as two distinct species, Daurian Shrike and Turkestan Shrike. At the time of writing there are currently no accepted records of Turkestan Shrike for Scotland (*contra* Forrester *et al.* 2007 and Slack 2009), and only two accepted records of Daurian Shrike (an adult male Fetlar, Shetland, 14–17 September 2002, and an adult female North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 15–20 September 2014), again *contra* Forrester *et al.* (2007) and Slack (2009). The remaining records fall into the either/or category, although it should be noted that BBRC is currently undertaking a review of these records to see whether any of these can

be assigned to species, and this situation may change in the near future.

Of the total of 113 records of 'Isabelline Shrikes' recorded in Britain to the end of 2016, to date only around 10% or so have been accepted by BBRC to species level, mainly due to the difficulties of identification in anything other than adult male plumage. This is in contrast to other national committees, for example the corresponding Dutch CDNA committee accepted 80% of records between 1985 and 2006 to species level, including several first-calendar year birds (van der Laan 2008).

Distribution

Turkestan Shrike breeds from Iran north and east to far north-western Xinjiang, through Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, western Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan and southern Kazakhstan. Daurian Shrike breeds to the north east of Turkestan Shrike, from the Russian Altai through northern China and Mongolia. Both species are long distance migrants, wintering in the Arabian Peninsula and Africa. However, based on its more northerly distribution and longer migration route, Daurian Shrike could be expected to be the more regular of the two species occurring in western Europe, even although the breeding grounds of Turkestan Shrike are in fact closer, but the true occurrence pattern in Scotland is currently clouded by uncertainty, due to the above mentioned identification issues.

Identification of Daurian and Turkestan Shrikes

As a starting point, both birds were easily aged as first-calendar year birds, based on the obvious dark sub-terminal bars to the pale tipped wings coverts and tertials (Kiat & Perlman 2016). When seen side-by-side (probably a unique privilege in Britain) the two birds were so different in plumage that we soon reached the conclusion that they were most probably examples of the two different

Plate 160. 1cy Daurian Shrike, Foula, Shetland, September 2017. © *Kris Gibb*

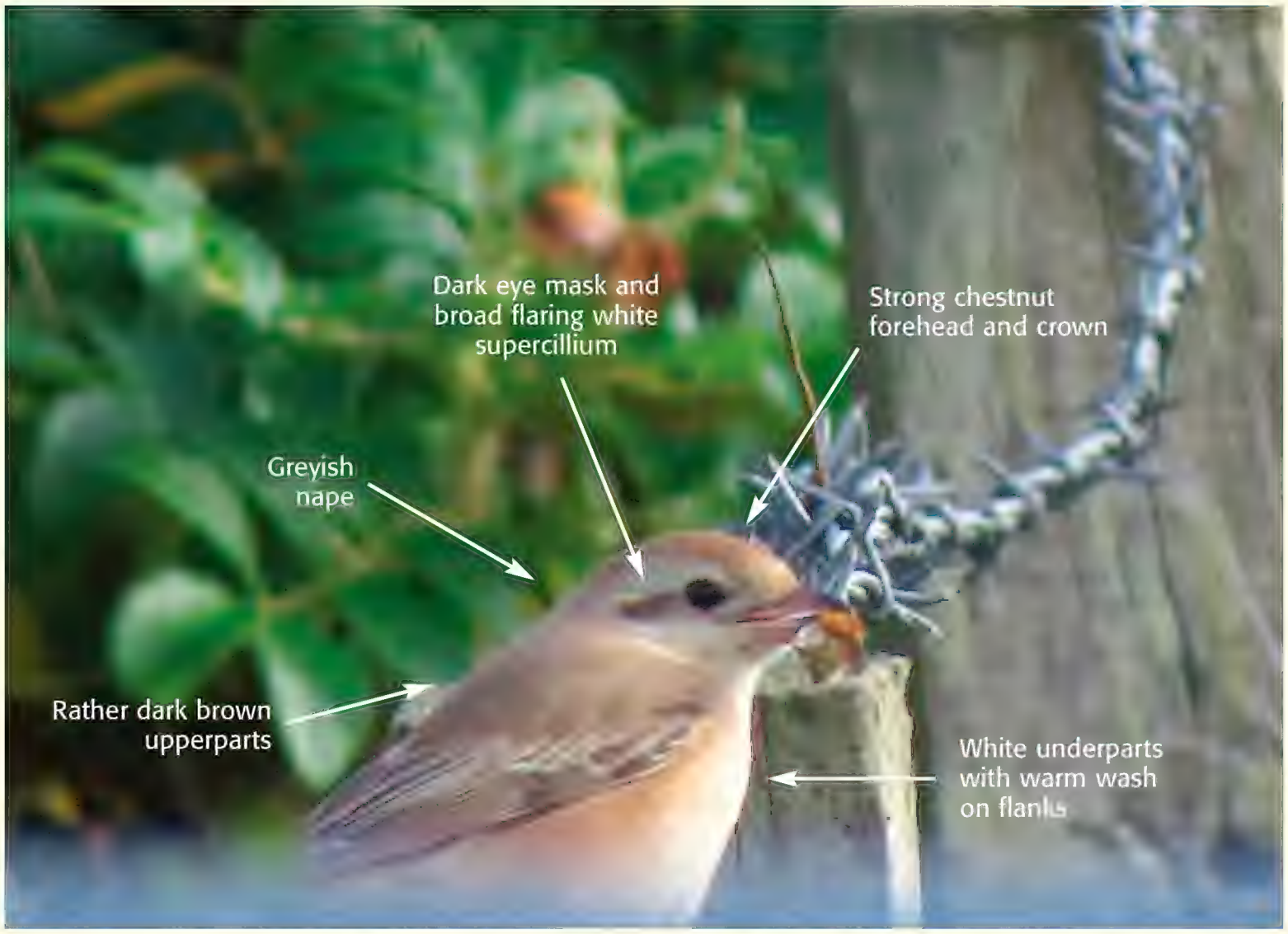
Dark eye mask and broad flaring white supercillium
Strong chestnut forehead and crown
Greyish nape
Rather dark brown upperparts
White underparts with warm wash on flanks

Plate 161. 1cy Turkestan Shrike, Foula, Shetland, September 2017. © *Mark Wilkinson*

species. For the separation of the two species, the most useful publications are (in order of publication date) Worfolk (2000), van Duivendijk (2010) and Garner (2014). It should be noted that first-calendar-year birds echo the eventual adult plumage, being a slightly subdued version of the older birds.

We identified the original Burns bird as a Daurian Shrike (subject to acceptance by BBRC) based on the following features:

- A weak, ill-defined eye mask, which was brown rather than black.
- Complete absence of any pale supercilium above the eye.
- Concolourous sandy brown forehead, crown, nape and mantle, lacking any contrast.
- Underparts heavily suffused warm buff throughout, and from a distance not contrasting greatly with the sandy brown upperparts.
- In general, the overall plumage looked a fairly uniform sandy brown (apart from an obviously contrasting rufous tail) with an appearance reminiscent of a large female Redstart.

Bearing in mind that BBRC has yet to accept anything other than adult male Turkestan Shrikes, the original Braidfit bird was provisionally identified in the field as a Turkestan Shrike based on the following features:

- A stronger, darker well-defined eye mask, much more obvious than the Burns bird.
- A broad, off-white supercilium flaring behind the eye.
- A warm chestnut forehead and crown, strongly contrasting with a colder nape, giving a capped appearance.
- The upperparts were generally darker brown than Daurian Shrike.
- Whiter underparts contrasting more with the upperparts, with a contrasting warm apricot wash along the flanks.
- The entire plumage showed more similarities to either Red-backed or Brown Shrike, hinting at some distant ancestry, which is not an impression normally suggested by Daurian Shrike.

Plate 162. 1cy Turkestan Shrike, Foula, Shetland, October 2017. More reminiscent of either Red-backed or Brown Shrike, due to its darker plumage and more contrasting head pattern. © *Kris Gibb*

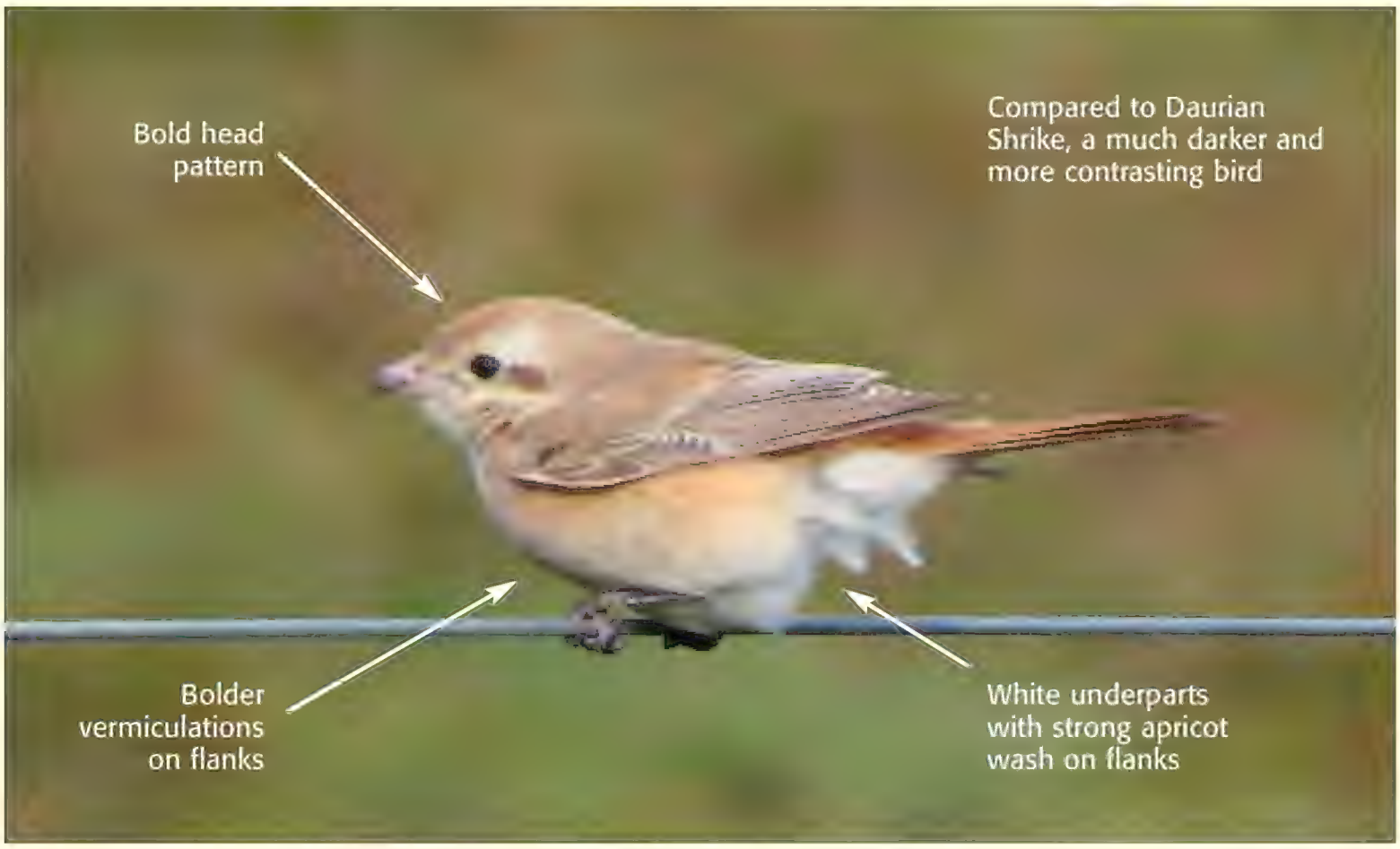
Bold head pattern
Compared to Daurian Shrike, a much darker and more contrasting bird
Bolder vermiculations on flanks
White underparts with strong apricot wash on flanks

Plate 163. 1cy Turkestan Shrike, Foula, Shetland, October 2017. © *Mark Wilkinson*

This identification appears to be supported by DNA analysis, from feathers shed during ringing, but again this record is still subject to acceptance by BBRC. On analysis, the cytb sequence was novel, but the nearest match was actually to *collurio* (i.e. 990/993 base pairs identical to a Red-backed Shrike from Xinjiang, north-western China). Surprisingly, *phoenicuroides* and *collurio* appear to share some DNA sequences, most likely through distant hybridisation events, but both show clear differences to the clearly distinct *isabellinus* clade. However, it is fair to say that much more research still needs to be done on the DNA sequence of the 'Red-tailed Shrike' complex.

The main differences are well illustrated in the photographs contained within this article.

What to do on finding an 'Isabelline' Shrike?

Any observer lucky enough to find an 'Isabelline' Shrike in future should take careful notes and ideally a series of digital photographs in a range of lights, since some of the plumage tones are quite subtle and can vary immensely depending on the light conditions. Particular attention should be paid to the exact head pattern, as in many cases this is the key to separating the two species. Any material collected containing DNA would obviously be helpful too, especially for trapped birds.

Adult males are the most distinctive, but the majority of first-year birds should be separable given good enough views. However, it must also be recognized that some individuals showing atypical plumage features may still defy specific identification, especially in non-adult plumages. Like several other recent splits of 'cryptic species', observers should not become too disheartened by this, but see it as a challenge. Commenting on the first British record on the Isle of May in 1950, the editorial in Sharrock & Grant (1982) made the following trenchant comment "Nevertheless, these rufous-tailed shrikes will continue to straggle westwards and reach the British Isles, mostly in late autumn, regardless of how human beings classify and re-classify them." That statement is as true now as it was in 1982.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Geoff and Donna Atherton for finding the Braidfit bird, and for making us feel welcome on Foula over many years. Also, many thanks to Roger Riddington for making photographs and biometrics of the trapped bird available, and to Martin Collinson for sharing the DNA results.

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Plate 164. First-winter (2cy) Thayer's Gull, Bruichladdich, Islay, Argyll, 2 March 2014. The initial views in heavily overcast conditions with rain threatening. Note smooth brown underparts and nape, and darker primaries. © *Mark Wilkinson*

Thayer's Gull on Islay, Argyll, March 2014 – the first Scottish record

K. GIBB, M. WILKINSON & D. MORRISON

A visit to Islay in March 2014 was something we'd planned and looked forward to for several weeks. Our main target birds were Richardson's Cackling Goose and Chough, but equally we all looked forward to seeing impressive numbers of geese, a potentially impressive display of raptors, as well as the chance of finding some 'white-wingers', and of course the pleasure of visiting Islay for the first time.

Our trip began with an early start on 1 March, timing our arrival in Campbeltown at first light to maximise the opportunity to do some birding before our ferry from Kennacraig. These limited few hours were very productive, giving us just enough time to catch up with a classic looking first-winter (2cy) American Herring Gull, as well as a pair of long-staying Snow Geese and a third-winter (4cy) Iceland Gull, the trip was off to a flyer! Our first afternoon on Islay showed us glimpses of what could be expected, with male Hen Harrier, great views of Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese and a first-winter (2cy) Iceland Gull seen within minutes of getting off the boat. The crossing itself had produced multiple Black-throated and Great Northern Divers, and no less than four White-tailed Eagles!

The morning of 2 March started out with perfect blue skies and sunshine, a glorious morning to be out. We spent most of the morning on Ardnave Point, watching Choughs and checking gulls, geese and divers. The forecast was for a rain front to arrive from early afternoon onwards, so we decided to head back towards Bowmore and late morning found us checking for geese along the coast road bordering the west side of Loch Indaal. Just north of Bruichladdich, from the car we saw a large number of gulls roosting on a small rocky islet 30 m or so offshore. We pulled over into a convenient parking space outside Loch Gorm House, and began checking the gulls, which were at least 90% Common Gulls. Unfortunately, they were all facing into the stiff breeze, and we had mostly difficult 'back end-on' views. Despite this, we soon noticed an unusual gull roosting on the front right of the flock, a larger first-winter bird. From our position it was difficult to get much on it, however the overall appearance already had us thinking it might be of Nearctic origin, and soon the opinion forming amongst us was that the bird was most likely a dark first-winter (2cy) Kumlien's Gull*, but better views from side-on were definitely needed!

We quickly walked 75 m back along the road towards Bruichladdich Distillery to get a better angle, but unfortunately stopping and setting up tripods and telescopes caused most of the Common Gulls to fly out onto the sea. Luckily, the gull in question stayed for a few minutes, sheltering low down from the breeze (Plate 164) before flying a short distance onto a prominent rock, sitting there for a few more minutes (Plate

Footnote: Thayer's Gull *Larus glaucoides thayeri* and Kumlien's Gull *L.g. kumlieni* are currently recognised as subspecies of Iceland Gull.

Plate 165. First-winter (2cy) Thayer's Gull, Bruichladdich, Islay, Argyll, 2 March 2014. Fortunately the bird flew to a nearby prominent rock, where the light was better. Note the dark primaries and rather solidly marked tertials and tail. Structure judged to be similar to an Iceland Gull, with a rather rounded head and small bill. © *Kris Gibb*

Plate 166. First-winter (2cy) Thayer's Gull, Bruichladdich, Islay, Argyll, 2 March 2014. After only a couple of minutes, the bird flew further out into the bay. In flight, reminiscent of a juvenile American Herring Gull, with a fairly solidly dark tail and heavily barred uppertail coverts. © *Kris Gibb*

165) before flying again (Plate 166–167), this time to join the Common Gulls out on the water. By this time, we'd managed a few photos, none of any great quality but at least enough to give a good impression of the bird. We briefly discussed the possibility of Thayer's Gull* but to be honest we didn't think that overall the bird was dark enough, surely a dark end Kumlien's was more likely? With no relevant literature with us and limited connection to the internet, we put news out of the bird as a dark Kumlien's Gull. Views on the back of the camera looked interesting but inconclusive, and with no accepted British records of Thayer's Gull at the time of observation, we weren't entirely sure where the line could be drawn between a dark Kumlien's Gull and a pale Thayer's Gull?

The sea was quite rough and choppy and the bird soon became difficult to see, so with the light now deteriorating and rain beginning to fall, we were unable to add any more details or photos and left soon after. For the rest of the day we birded close to the car, finding an adult Iceland Gull near Bowmore, a small group of Brent Geese, which were new for the trip, and had fine views of two male Hen Harriers, as well as finally pinning down a Richardson's Cackling Goose at Loch Skerrols, amongst a large group of Barnacle Geese.

The following morning (3 March), we spent most of our time around the south end of Islay before making our way slowly towards Port Askaig for our return ferry mid-afternoon, a

relaxing final day which produced five Golden Eagles, two White-tailed Eagles, an adult Iceland Gull and improved views of the same Richardson's Cackling Goose near Skerrols. Unfortunately, though, there was no sight of the mystery gull in a brief search at Bruichladdich. After a bit of a journey we were home late that evening, tired but exhilarated from what had been a truly memorable weekend of spectacular birds and scenery.

On the Tuesday, after travelling back to Nijmegen (the Netherlands), Mark Wilkinson took the first steps towards finding some unanswered questions on our Islay gull by posting some images online to a UK gull forum on Facebook, captioned as a "dark 1-w Kumlien's Gull" and awaited comments, which came within minutes. The same evening, all helpful images we had between us were uploaded and sent to Martin Garner for his *Birding Frontiers* website. The feedback in general was very positive, with a consensus soon forming that this bird was in fact fine for Thayer's Gull, albeit towards the paler end of the range but still well within the expected variation when compared to photos of birds on their home soil.

Over the following days we grew in confidence as our research continued to support the identification that our bird had been a first-winter (2cy) Thayer's Gull after all, and it was with renewed confidence that we submitted our description and photographs to BBRC. With information that the identification had switched to Thayer's Gull now public, it emerged that the same bird had also been seen briefly (but not positively identified) on the opposite side of Loch Indaal at Gartbreck on the 27 February by A. Cross and S. Jacques. More exciting was fresh news on 11 March that the bird was still present, just north of Bruichladdich, and had been photographed by J. Dickson and A. McNee. These new images were better than what we had managed in poor light (Plate 168) and helped to confirm this first record for Scotland. Thereafter, the bird remained faithful to the Bruichladdich area, being finally observed for the last time on 25 April.

Plate 167. First-winter (2cy) Thayer's Gull, Bruichladdich, Islay, Argyll, 2 March 2014. Note darker outer primaries, pale inner window and dark secondary bar. © *Kris Gibb*

Identification

Despite having only Common and Black-headed Gulls for direct comparison, this Thayer's Gull could comfortably be judged as being reminiscent of Iceland Gull in size and structure. The rather round head and dark eye sitting well forward on the head contributed towards a 'gentle' expression. The bill was relatively short, not heavy, without a strong or prominent gonys-angle, and narrowing slightly towards base. The bill was mostly dark but with the hint of a paler base, this was difficult to judge especially in dull conditions but was noted in the field and can be seen in one or two images, which would be consistent with a first-winter (2cy) in March. The legs were of medium length, and rather deep pink in colour.

The general appearance was fairly typical of a gull in its first winter with plumage dominated by various shades of brown and off-white. The head was a dirty mud-brown and a velvety brown suffusion on the upperparts was especially dark in the nape, the entire underparts were a very smooth pale brown, unlike the blotchy and streaked look of so many of our own immature gulls. The primaries were long and very dark brown, importantly the darkest part of the plumage, highlighted by narrow pale fringes forming thin chevrons, which did not extend back along the feather edges. The tertials too were a fairly solid dark brown, though not quite as dark as the primaries, with some limited pale patterning concentrated toward the feather tips. In Kumlien's Gull, the tertials tend to be paler, more chequered and concolourous with the scapulars. The scapulars were pale brown with the majority having brown anchor-shaped centres.

The appearance of a very dark Kumlien's-type gull in Aberdeen (January 2016) really underlined once again the importance of good views, or even better a selection of images, of these birds in flight. This is absolutely crucial to secure a firm identification, without this it can't be done with any certainty. It's tempting to

Plate 168. First-winter (2cy) Thayer's Gull, Bruichladdich, Islay, Argyll, 11 March 2014. In better light conditions, the 'venetian blind' effect of the outer primaries, and the dark secondary bar were more visible. Note the smooth grey brown appearance of the head, neck and underparts. © *Al McNee*

suggest that many features of a dark Kumlien's and pale Thayer's, especially those which are visible when the bird is at rest, overlap to some extent. Inevitably, there will and probably have been birds which divide opinion, but the acceptance now of a handful of Thayer's Gulls in Britain give us a good idea of the benchmark BBRC have laid down and upperwing and tail pattern are key.

In flight, an almost entirely dark tail, dark brown secondary-bar and darker brown outer primaries should be darker and contrast with the rest of the plumage, as can be seen in photos of the Islay bird. The tail is fairly solidly brown, with the uppertail coverts, undertail coverts and rump heavily barred with brown. These upperpart markings are in fact very reminiscent of American Herring Gull, but that species was never considered due to the much larger size and typically heavier bill of American Herring Gull. The pattern of the secondaries consists of dark outer and pale inner webs, but as these are bunched close together and outer webs are more prominent, you are left with what appears as a dark secondary bar. The primaries too have dark outer webs and pale inner webs which contrast to create the 'venetian blind' effect, these lying next to a large pale silvery window on the inner primaries of the upperwing. In Kumlien's Gull, all these areas are more subdued, with little or no contrast resulting in a pretty much uniform appearance. The underwing in both Kumlien's and Thayer's is more reminiscent of a typical white-winged gull, with little evidence of those dark markings in the primaries above.

In summary, the key identification features are as follows:

- Structurally somewhere between Iceland Gull and Herring Gull, rounded head and small bill suggesting the bird was probably a female (male Thayer's can overlap with Herring Gull in size).
- The bird was mostly still in juvenile plumage, despite the fact it was already probably 7–8 months old. This is a good feature for Thayer's, as other large gulls would be more advanced in moult by this date.
- The upperwing showed the characteristic pattern of dark brown (but clearly not black) primaries, a pale window on the inner primaries, and the outer (six) primaries with dark outer web and pale inner web (giving the 'venetian blind' effect). On the underwing, the primaries gave a very pale impression.
- The uppertail was fairly solidly dark brown, with only slight barring to the base of the outer two pairs of feather. The uppertail coverts were heavily barred dark brown.
- Smooth, velvety brown neck, nape and underparts, lacking any blotching or streaking.
- The paler brown tertials with fairly solidly dark centres with limited pale notches towards the tip. The primaries were darker than the tertials - in Kumlien's Gull, they tend to be more concolorous.
- The scapulars and mantle feathers had a pale edge, dark sub-terminal U shape and dark shaft line (so-called 'anchor' marks).
- The bill was predominantly dark, with only a slight hint of a paler base.
- The legs were darker pink in colour than the flesh coloured legs of many similar aged gulls.

Distribution

Thayer's Gulls breed in scattered cliff colonies throughout coastal regions of the Canadian High Arctic, from Banks Island east to northern Baffin Island and Ellesmere Island, and extreme north-west Greenland. The breeding range lies to the north and west of that of Kumlien's Gull, which breeds from southern Baffin Island and the Digges Sound area, west to eastern Southampton Island. The majority of Thayer's Gulls winter along the Pacific coast of North America, from British Colombia south to Baja California, in Northern Mexico. It is a rare, but regular wintering bird in the Great Lakes region, and is being found with increasing frequency along the east coast of North America, the continental interior and the Gulf coast (Arlow 2016).

Accepted records

As already mentioned, at the time of this observation in 2014, there were no accepted records of Thayer's Gull for Britain, which added to the identification difficulties, and made claiming this bird as a Thayer's Gull quite a big call. The first accepted record was of an adult in Essex in November 2010 (Hudson *et al.* 2015, Arlow 2016), followed by a well-twitched 2cy bird in Lincolnshire in April 2012 (Hudson *et al.*

2015). These were followed by the Argyll bird described here, a 1cy bird in Yorkshire in December 2014, and an adult bird in Suffolk in March 2016; these three records were accepted by BBRC in 2017 (Holt *et al.* 2017). However, a 1cy bird in Oxfordshire from December 2007 (with the same bird noted in Derbyshire in February 2008) has just recently been accepted as the first British record, pre-dating all previous records (BOURC 2018). Several birds have also reached Iceland (3) and Ireland (9), as would be expected for a bird coming from the Canadian High Arctic, but single birds have also reached Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain (Edelaar *et al.* 2016).

With the current six British records spanning the winter months from November through to April, and seven different counties involved, including several birds seen either at inland locations or on the east coast, this is a bird that should be looked for anywhere large gulls congregate, and more records are sure to follow as the identification criteria become better established. However, due to the difficulty of identification, it is likely that BBRC will continue to apply a rather conservative approach to acceptance "Many years of discussion among gull enthusiasts has led to a gradual distillation and clarification of the most useful field characters, but even today only the safest of claims make the cut" (Holt *et al.* 2017).

Acknowledgements

So, much thanks must go to the late Martin Garner of *Birding Frontiers*; his help and insight was invaluable in reaching the correct identification of this bird. Many thanks to the other observers who contributed with notes and images of the bird, including A. Cross, J. Dickson, S. Jacques and A. McNee.

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Scottish Bird Sightings

1 January to 31 March 2018

S.L. RIVERS

Records in Scottish Bird Sightings are published for interest only. All records are subject to acceptance by the relevant records committee.

The following abbreviations for recording areas are used: Angus & Dundee - A&D; Argyll - Arg; Ayrshire - Ayrs; Borders - Bord; Caithness - Caith; Dumfries & Galloway D&G; Highland - High; Lothian - Loth; Moray & Nairn - M&N; North-East Scotland - NES; Outer Hebrides - OH; Perth & Kinross - P&K; Shetland - Shet; Upper Forth - UF.

The species order is that of the IOC World Birdlist as adopted by BOU on 1 January 2018.

Plate 169. American Wigeon, Clachnaharry, Inverness, Highland, January 2018. © *Iain Leach*

Good numbers of Nearctic wildfowl were present across the country, white-winged gull numbers were the highest in recent times, boosted by an influx in February, while Hawfinch numbers remained high and Snow Bunting totals were the best in several years.

Todd's Canada Goose (form *interior*): one was still on Islay (Arg) to the end of February; one was at Loch of Skene (NES) on 14–20 January, and one near Kirkhill (High) on 17 February. **Cackling Goose (form *hutchinsii*):** at least one was still present on Islay (Arg) to 18 February at least, and one possibly of this form was at Baleshare/ Balranald, North Uist (OH) from 25 January into April. **Snow Goose:** a white-phase bird was still at Borve, Berneray (OH) to 31 March; one was at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve/Rattray (NES) on 3–4 January; two nearby at St. Combs (NES) on 4–17 February and 13 March and Loch of Strathbeg again on 28 March; one at Loch of Swartmill, Westray (Ork) on 2–4 March and one at Marwick, Mainland (Ork) on 2 March, with presumed same over Dounby, Mainland (Ork) on 20 March. A blue-phase bird was still at Findhorn Bay (M&N) to 20 February. **Ross's Goose:** one was at Loch of Skaill, Mainland (Ork) on 31 March. **Taiga Bean Goose:** the Slamannan flock (UF) numbered 202 birds on 1 January, reducing to 80 on 26th and finally five on 10 February. Elsewhere three were at Slains Pools (NES) on 24 January. **Tundra Bean Goose:** one flew over Dunnet Bay (Caith) on 18 March; one was at Letham Pools, near Collessie (Fife) from 25 March. **Bewick's Swan:** an adult was again at Ruthwell (D&G) on 29 March. **Garganey:** a drake was at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (D&G) from 15–20 March. **American Wigeon:** single drakes were at Clachnaharry, near Inverness (High) still to 27 March; at Tain (High) still to 20 March; at Udale Bay RSPB Reserve still to 9 March; at Caol (High) still to 9 January, and at Aileodair, North Uist (OH) still to 11 January. One was at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 3 January; one at Dipple (Ayrs) on 7 January to 19 March, with presumed same at Balkenna (Ayrs) on 26 January; one at Oban Trumisgarry, North Uist on 7 January; at Ardheisker, North Uist on 8–19 January; at Portmahomack (High) on 30 January and 11 March, and at Campbeltown (Arg) on 7 March. **Black Duck:** the regular returning male was at Strontian (High) from 23 March. **Green-winged Teal:** single drakes remained at Loch

Flemington (High/M&N) to 15 March; at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree (Arg) to 4 February; at Loch of Skaill, Mainland (Ork) still to 7 January; at Loch Sandary, North Uist (OH) to 11 January, and one was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay (Arg) again on 2 January. Singles were on North Ronaldsay (Ork) from 8 January to 24 March; at Port Allen (P&K) on 9 January; at Chirnside (Bord) on 14–27 January; at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 18 January; at Culswick Marsh, Mainland (Shet) on 24 January to 16 February; at Loch Spynie (M&N) on 3–5 February; on Papa Westray (Ork) on 4 February and again in late March; at Strathcarron (High) on 11–18 February; at Lossiemouth (M&N) on 17 February; at Dornoch (High) on 19 February; at Baugh, Tiree on 19 February; at Tankerness, Mainland (Ork) on 20 February; on Sanday (Ork) on 21 February; at Finstown, Mainland (Ork) on 25 February; at Loch Sandary, North Uist again on 2–31 March; in Marwick Bay, Mainland (Ork) on 4–8 March, and at Balranald, North Uist on 7–29 March, with two there on 30th.

Red-crested Pochard: a drake was at Kilconquhar Loch (Fife) on 10–19 March. **Ferruginous Duck:** one was at St. Margaret's Loch, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh (Loth) on 12 March. **Ring-necked Duck:** a drake was still off Acharacle Pier (High) to 30 March; one still at Carlingwark Loch (D&G) to 6 February and again on 20 March; one was at Little Loch Shin, Lairg (High) from 14 January to 11 March; one at Loch Leven (P&K) on 29 January; one on Coot Loch, Benbecula (OH) from 3 February to 28 March; one at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay (Arg) on 10 February; one at Loch an Tiumpan, Lewis (OH) on 13–23 March, and one at Duddingston Loch/Figgate Pond/ Blackford Pond, all Edinburgh (Loth) on 27 March into April.

King Eider: single females were off Mid Yell Voe, Yell (Shet) from 2 January to 2 March, and Symbister, Whalsay (Shet) on 2 January. **Surf Scoter:** the adult drake was still off Musselburgh/Fisherrow and Joppa (Loth) to 31 March; one was in Bluemull Sound, Yell/Unst (Shet) from 2 January to mid-February; one off Lower Largo/Ruddons Point (Fife) from 3 January to 31 March; two drakes off Quanterness, Mainland (Ork) on 6 January, with one still on 7–11 January; two in Gullane Bay (Loth) on 20 January and on 29 March; one in the Sound of Taransay, off Harris (OH) on 4 February to 30 March; a female and 1st-winter drake were off Sandhead, Luce Bay (D&G) on 19 February, and a drake off Uyea, Unst (Shet) on 2 March. **American White-winged Scoter (form *deglandi*):** a drake was off Fisherrow/Musselburgh (Loth) from 24 March into April - the first for Lothian. **Smew:** a drake was still on North Ronaldsay (Ork) to 22 March; a redhead still at Lochore Meadows CP (Fife) to 22 March; a redhead still on Barr Loch, Lochwinnoch RSPB Reserve (Clyde) to 13 March, with a drake also there on 6–29 March; a drake was again at Loch of Kinnordy RSPB Reserve (A&D) from 2 January to 27 February; a redhead at Castle Loch NR (D&G) on 19–29 January; an adult drake was at Vane Farm RSPB Reserve, Loch Leven (P&K) on 5 February; a redhead was at Barnshean Loch (Ayrs) on 6–20 February; a redhead at Carlingwark Loch (D&G) on 8–25 February; a redhead off Leven (Fife) on 14 February, and a redhead at Loch Scarmclate (High) on 18 February. **Hooded Merganser:** an adult drake was on Hirta, St. Kilda (OH) on 29 March into April.

White-billed Diver: the returning adult was off Hoxa Head, South Ronaldsay (Ork) and in Water Sound/ off Burray (Ork) still to 3 February; singles were in Bluemull Sound, Yell/Unst (Shet) on 2 January; off Houton Head, Mainland (Ork) on 3 January; off Brora (High) on 5th; off Finstown, Mainland (Ork) on 6th; off Holborn Head (Caith) on 7–8th; off Kirkabister, Mainland (Shet) on 19th; in Mousa Sound (Shet) on 19th, and off Sandwick/ Leebotten, Mainland (Shet) on 27 January to 18 February; in South Nesting Bay, Mainland (Shet) on 16 February; off North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 18 February; one found dead on North Ronaldsay on 3 March; one off North Ronaldsay on 13 March; one off Cava, Mainland (Ork) on 22 March and off Houton Head, Mainland on 24th and 26 March; up to 11 off Portsoy (NES) on 24–25th; one off Eoligarry, Barra (OH) on 25–29th; two off Port Nis, Lewis (OH) on 26–28th; one flew past Corsewall Point (D&G) on 28 March, and one again off Portsoy on 31 March. **Pied-billed Grebe:** singles at Loch Feorlin, near Lochgilphead (Arg) and at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) - the first Shetland record, were present throughout.

Glossy Ibis: one was still at Cornaigmore, then Balevullin, Tiree (Arg) to 4 February; one still at Salen, Mull (Arg) to 4 January; five still at Fidden, Mull to 2 January, then at Loch Pottie, Mull on 6th; one at Kilaulay, South Uist (OH) on 1–8 January; two were on Iona (Arg) on 4 January; one near Loch Kinnabus, Islay (Arg) on 6 January; one at Tankerness, Mainland (Ork) on 16–25 January; one at Kilmaluag, Skye (High) on 21–23 February, with it, or another, at Shegra (High) on 27 February to 11 March; one at Ardivachar, South Uist on 8 March, and one at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 25–29 March, then at Kilmoluaig, Tiree on 30th. **Eurasian Bittern:** one was still at Loch of Kinnordy RSPB Reserve (A&D) to 25 February; one at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 17 February, and one at Bavelaw Marsh (Loth) on 9–11 March. **Great White Egret:** one was at Rossie Bog (Fife) from 12 January to 11 February, then

presumed same at Angle Park GP, Collessie (Fife) on 22 February and at Guardbridge (Fife) on 23–25 February.

Northern Harrier: an adult male was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 4 February. **Black Kite:** a juvenile [possibly an eastern form hybrid] roosted regularly at Langskaill Plantation, Tankerness, Mainland (Ork) from 10–17 February and 15 March into April, with same at Bay of Suckquoy, Dounby, Mainland (Ork) on 13 March. **Rough-legged Buzzard:** one was at Glen Strathfarrar (High) on March. **Common Crane:** an adult was still at Borve, Berneray (OH) to 25 March; one at Meikle Loch (NES) on 7 January; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 10 January, and an immature at Deerness, Mainland (Ork) on 14 March into April.

Avocet: two were at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (D&G) on 29–30 March. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** one was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay (Arg) on 27 March. **Grey Phalarope:** one was found dead at Brora (High) on 17 March; two were off Gullane Point (Loth) on 19–20 March. **Lesser Yellowlegs:** one was at Aikerness, Evie, Mainland (Ork) on 5 January.

Bonaparte's Gull: an adult was at Cardwell Bay, near Gourock (Clyde) on 23 January and 12–25 February. **Laughing Gull:** one was off Kinnaird Head, near Fraserburgh (NES) on 1 February. **Mediterranean Gull:** very few reports away from the Firth of Forth, but two inland at Loch Leven (P&K) on 21 March was notable. **Ring-billed Gull:** an adult was still at Strathclyde Loch CP (Clyde) to 18 February; a first-winter was at Barrapol, Tiree (Arg) on 26 January, at Sandaig, Tiree on 1 February, at Greenhill, Tiree on 2–4 February and Sandaig again on 17–20 February, and an adult was at Tiumpan Head, Lewis (OH) on 13 March.

Glaucous Gull: large numbers, mostly in the Northern and Western Isles, though recorded south to Loch Ryan (D&G) and Elie Ness (Fife). Over 200 noted in January, mostly ones and twos, but with peak counts of eight at Balevullin, Tiree (Arg) on 30th and six on Tiree on 22nd. Over 370 reported in February, mostly 1–3 birds but with higher counts of 19 at Rubha Arnal, North Uist (OH) on 27th, with seven there on 17th, and eight at Marwick Bay, Mainland (Ork) on 27th, with seven there on 16–17th. Over 180 in March, mostly singles but with higher counts of 20 at Ruha Arnal on 2–4th, 12 at Stornoway, Lewis (OH) on 25th, and seven at Marwick Bay on 21st, with six there on 11 March. **Iceland Gull:** large numbers recorded, mostly in the Northern and Western Isles, but seen as far south as D&G and Borders. Over 270 in January, mainly ones and twos, but higher counts of 21 at Stornoway, Lewis (OH) on 30th, with 15 there on 28th, and 14 on 23rd, and five at Lerwick, Mainland (Shet) on 4th and 18 January. About 400 in February, mostly ones and two, but peak counts of 35 at Rubha Arnal, North Uist (OH) on 17th, with 28 there on 27th, and 31 at Stornoway, Lewis on 17th, with 30 there on 11th. Over 420 in March, with high counts of 40 at Rubha Arnal on 2–4th, with 30 still there on 9th, and 25 at Stornoway on 22nd. **Kumlien's Gull:** a second-winter was at Ardvule, South Uist (OH) on 27 January; a second-winter at Scrabster (Caith) on 3–25 February and 3 March; a juvenile on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 6 February to 31 March; an adult at Tiumpan Head, Lewis (OH) on 8 February; one at Shewalton, near Irvine (Ayrs) on 12 February; two were at Smerclate, South Uist on 16 February, with at least one still on 19–22nd; one at Scatness, Mainland (Shet) on 15 February; a juvenile at Rubha Arnal, North Uist (OH) on 17th and two on 27 February to 9 March; at least one was at Stornoway, Lewis on 18 February; one on Barra (OH) on 19 February, with a second-winter at Brevig, Barra on 20–22nd, and an adult and a juvenile at the Vatersay causeway, Barra on 21st, with a second-winter there on 22–24th; a juvenile at Ardvule on 22 February with a second-winter there on 4–27 March; one at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 28 February; a third-winter at Tiumpan Head on 1–12 March; one at Stornoway, Lewis on 4–22 March; an adult was at Rushgarry. North Uist on 10 March, and a second-winter at Thurso (Caith) on 30–31 March. **Yellow-legged Gull:** an adult was at Shewalton, near Irvine (Ayrs) on 30 January.

Brünnich's Guillemot: one flew past Lamba Ness, Unst (Shet) on 5 January. **Snowy Owl:** one was at Gladhill, near Garmouth (M&N) on 30 January; a female was still on Eday (Ork) to mid-March, then on Papa Westray (Ork) on 22 March and Stronsay (Ork). **'Taiga' Merlin** [form *columbarius*]: - a female/immature male was at Burnside, near Thurso (Caith) on 3 February and nearby at Holborn Head (Caith) on 18 February - a potential first for Britain. **Gyrfalcon:** a white-morph bird was at Loch Craisg, near Tongue (High) on 25 February.

Great Grey Shrike: one was at Drumashie Moor, near Loch Ashie (High) on 31 January; one at Meall Mor, near Moy (High) on 21–22 March, and one at Innerhadden, Kinloch Rannoch (P&K) on 31 March. **Waxwing:** most noted in eastern areas, and in small groups with few double-figure flocks; over 200 in January, with peak counts of 35 in Aberdeen (NES) on 1st, 13 in Elgin (M&N) on 21–30th, 14 in Dundee (A&D) on 29th, and 12 in Inverness (High) on 31st. Over 90 noted in February, with higher counts of 13 still in Elgin on 2nd and 23 at Beauly (High) on 9th. Over 140 reported in March, with

Plate 170. Shore Lark, Loch Fleet, Highland, January 2018. © *David Main*

peak counts of 20 in Aberdeen on 2–3rd, with 16 there on 9th and 15 on 14th, 17 in Elgin on 5th, 15 near Nethybridge (High) on 7th, and 16 in Inverness on 21–22nd. **Woodlark:** one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 20 March. **Shore Lark:** two were still at Coul Links, Loch Fleet (High) from December to 18 February.

Firecrest: one was still at Hillhead, Glasgow (Clyde) to 10 January; one still at Holm, Mainland (Ork) to 21 March; one at Armadale Castle (High) on 5 January; one at Peffermill, Edinburgh on 21 January; one at Duddingston Loch NR, Edinburgh (Loth) on 23 January; one at St. Abbs (Bord) on 21 February, and one at Baile Mor, Iona (Arg) on 29 March into April. **Bluethroat:** an elusive male was seen at St. Margaret's Hope, South Ronaldsay (Ork) on 19 January and 4 March - only the fourth individual recorded to have overwintered in Scotland. **Water Pipit:** one was at Skateraw (Loth) from 7 January to 1 April; one at White Sands Bay/ Barns Ness (Loth) on 20 January to 4 February; two were near Ferny Ness, Longniddry (Loth) on 3 February, with one still on 25th, and one was at Coliieston (NES) on 3 March.

Hawfinch: the exceptional influx into Britain in autumn 2017 continued to produce records across Scotland in 2018, most presumably returning to northern Europe. Over 44 in January mainly in the south-east, with peak counts of 19 at Coldstream (Bord) on 21st, with 18 still there on 27th, seven at Duns (Bord) on 10th and seven at Holme Hill, Dunblane (UF) on 21st. Over 90 seen in February, mostly in eastern Scotland, with peak counts of 30 at Jedburgh (Bord) on 18th, 20 at Coldstream on 9th, and 20 at Scone Palace (P&K) on 11th. Over 130 in March, including ones and twos in the Northern and Western Isles, and with peak counts of 65 at Jedburgh on 10th and 35 at Coldstream on 11th. **Arctic Redpoll:** a bird not assigned to race was at Loch Stack Lodge, near Rhiconich (High) on 20 January. **Coue's Arctic Redpoll:** singles were at Finstown, Mainland (Ork) on 12–21 January; one at Skibberhoull, Whalsay (Shet) on 7 February to 3 March, and two at Wood of Ordiequish, near Fochabers (M&N) on 25 March with one there still on 31 March.

Lapland Bunting: at least eight were still at Wormiston (Fife) on 1 January, with two still on 3rd; one was at Creag Hastain, North Uist (OH) on 1 January; two were at Rubha Arnal, North Uist on 10th; singles at Skateraw (Loth) on 24 January; at John Muir CP, Dunbar (Loth) on 4 February; at Rubha Arnal again on 9 February; at Grenitote, North Uist and at Ardivachar, South Uist (OH) on 18 February; at Eoligarry, Barra (OH) on 8 March; at Middlequarter, North Uist on 11 March; on Vatersay (OH) on 12th; two at Ormiclate, South Uist on 17th; one at Brae of Achnahaird (High) on 25–26 March, and one at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 29 March. **Snow Bunting:** large numbers continued to be reported, mostly on the Northern and Western Isles, but noted as far south as Argyll and Lothian. Over 1,100 recorded in January, including high counts of 400 at Borve, Berneray (OH) on 11th, with 310 still there on 25th, 90 at Deerness, Mainland (Ork) on 25th and 74 on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 28th. Over 1,400 noted in February, with peak counts of 500 at Borve, Berneray and 300 at Sollas, North Uist (OH) on 19th, with 350 still at Borve on 21st, and 103 on North Ronaldsay on 11th. Over 800 noted in March, with peak counts of 200 at Borve, Berneray on 8th and 150 at Malaclete, North Uist (OH) on 13th.

Correction SB 38(1) p96: **Blackpoll Warbler:** should read "… 23 October - the ninth for Scotland."

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PhotoSPOT

Plate 171. On 13 October 2017, while visiting the Fairy Pools at the foot of the Black Cuillins near Glenbrittle on the Isle of Skye, I noticed this Raven repeatedly coming down to the edge of the car park.

It appeared to drop down a couple of times, attempting to pick up what seemed to be a piece of bread, before lifting back up in to the air. It would then rise up higher in the thermals, before flipping over on to his back and floated back down. I watched the Raven repeat this odd behaviour three to four times as I tried to photograph it.

Equipment: Canon 7D mk2, Canon 100–400mm mk2 lens, Aperture Priority, ISO 400, shutter 1/800, aperture f5.6.

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